

**AN EXPLORATION OF SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY  
TEACHERS' CONTENT KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICAN HISTORY**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I Emmanuel Bongumusa Zulu declare that

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God is a pillar of strength: this work is to His glory, praise, and worship to Unyazi Lwezulu (Shembe of Ebuhleni Home)

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## **DEDICATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The dissertation presents an exploration of selected South African history teachers' content knowledge of African history. Available literature says that teachers should have some benchmarks in order for them to be considered historically literate so that their learners benefit from them. The literature also reveals that, although it is impossible to measure how much content knowledge a history teacher should have, there is a certain level of content knowledge that is expected of them. The conceptual framework for this study that I use is called historical literacy as content knowledge. It consists of different four aspects: knowledge of historical dates, knowledge of historical figures, knowledge of historical places, and knowledge of historical events.

This study was conducted in Mtubatuba, in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Ten (10) history teachers were conveniently sampled, and data was generated through a focus-group discussion and individual interviews (which included evaluative questions). The selected history teachers were asked questions which revealed their content knowledge of African history, and their views on their respective content knowledge. The findings are thematically presented in response to the two key research questions. The data revealed that the participants were able to display differing levels of content knowledge such as average level, below average level, above average level, and a level of excellence. While some were able to respond to the evaluative questions, some could barely respond, demonstrating below average content knowledge. The participants demonstrated higher levels of content knowledge of South African history, but performed poorly when responding to questions about other African countries. The participants who struggled to answer the evaluative questions believed that some questions were not fair to them, as they had not taught on the topics recently, and had even forgotten content. The participants who did well said that they were satisfied with their performance since the questions they were asked required their basic knowledge as answers. These participants said that they were asked questions that required them to give answers based on the information they had already known even before they started school. The participants were proud of answering questions correctly; there was also a feeling that questions that were asked empowered them in terms of content knowledge. The participants

acknowledged that it was important to own a certain level of content knowledge so that a history teacher could be regarded as historically literate.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS**

OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
CAPS	National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
ANC	African National Congress
KZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

This study sought to examine South African history teachers' content knowledge of African history. Post-Apartheid South Africa is officially a democratic country coming from experiences of oppression, racism, and other forms of discrimination which characterised the periods of colonialism and Apartheid. South Africa, like many African countries, was colonised by Britain and had experiences which were both unique and similar to other African countries. By virtue of being a separate colony, and also because of its location, South Africa experienced a unique version of settler colonialism starting with the Dutch at the Cape, through the times of the colonial administration of the four colonies – the Cape, the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and Natal, until all four came under British rule as the Union of South Africa in 1910 (Friedman et al., 2016). Henceforth, the European settlers ran the colony without much interference from the colonial metropole; and this became more marked during the Apartheid era up to 1994. This was a singular experience which can even be used to explain sentiments of South African exceptionalism (Friedman et al., 2016). Oliver and Oliver (2017), like Friedman et al. discuss these exceptional experiences found in South Africa. The above scholars state that South Africa was firstly colonised by the Dutch by way of setting up a refreshment station. The idea was to have fresh meat and vegetables to supply the passing Dutch ships as they ploughed their way to the Spice Islands.

Eventually, however, land occupied by inhabitants such as the Khoikhoi and the San was appropriated. This was the first colonisation of South Africa without the usage of weapons. Nevertheless, South Africa experienced similar appropriation of raw materials such as gold and diamonds, and land as did other African countries, together with taxation and colonial education (Friedman et al., 2016). What was also similar about South Africa's colonisation was that, like in other colonies, Europeans chose to live in the country (just to make sure their efforts were successful meaning that they managed to take away things that belonged to Africans like the land) (Oliver

& Oliver, 2017). In spite of these differences and similarities, South Africa remains an African country and its history is situated within African history.

As was the case with most post-colonial African states, post-Apartheid South Africa worked on the transformation of society. One key aspect of this process was the education system. There have been numerous curriculum changes during this period. The first curriculum change was termed Curriculum 2005, although it was popularly known as Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (Chisholm, 2003; Moodley, 2013; Knight, 2005; and Motseke, 2005). Further curriculum reform led to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) up to the current National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). According to the current Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, contrary to times of colonialism and Apartheid, South Africa now has a new and progressive system of education. This system aims to improve thinking skills of learners, encouraging them to think creatively (South African History Online, 2011).

In relation to the history curriculum, there is currently a recommendation from the History Ministerial Task Team to make history a compulsory subject for all grades. Government has seriously been considering such for implementation in 2023 (Butcher, 2020; Pather, 2016). It is argued that learning history in all grades will help learners with valuable information that will open their eyes to bias, prejudice, misinformation, and propaganda (Butcher, 2020). However, Chisholm (2018) points out that there will be a need for the training of more history teachers to ensure that sufficient teachers are available. The History Ministerial Task Team also recommended a stronger focus on African history in the curriculum (South African History Online, 2011). This means that teachers would need to be equipped to meet the standards of such a new curriculum. The post-Apartheid South African History curricula have generally aimed at helping the learners understand the methods of historical enquiry and how to interpret the past (Manyane, 1999; Masooa, 2014). The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) also aims to provide learners with knowledge, values, and skills (South African History Online, 2011). The curriculum suggests what it would mean for a history learner to become historically literate. In other words, there are different benchmarks for historical literacy, such as historical content knowledge, historical understanding, historical method, historical consciousness, and historical

knowledge (Maposa & Wasserman, 2009). Downey (2015) mentions that historical literacy is about understanding the aims of history education. Scholars like Sridah (2015), (Lee, 2011) and Downey and Long (2009) aver that there is a certain level of content that a history teacher should attain in order to be considered historically literate. This study focuses only on the benchmark of historical content knowledge. Maposa and Wassermann (2009) argue that this benchmark is foundational, such that all other benchmarks are virtually impossible to achieve without it. This benchmark of historical literacy can be applied to African history as well as to other history of different parts of the world.

According to Lee (2011), students who are historically literate show this feature by being fluent in history subject matter, amongst other things Downey and Long (2016) add that a historically literate teacher must be knowledgeable about the past and must have an ability to help students construct conceptual knowledge. A knowledgeable history teacher is able to pass on the information to the learners and is also able to build on this to develop the other aspects of historical literacy such as conceptual understanding, source work (historical method), historical consciousness, and historical language (Maposa & Wasserman, 2009). This means that history teachers need to have a certain level of content knowledge in order to be considered historically literate (Sridah, 2015). History teachers should have various types of historical content knowledge when teaching history such as the ability to show knowledge of historical places, knowledge of historical figures, knowledge of historical events, and knowledge of historical dates, amongst others (Sridah, 2015).

Considering the vastness of space and the length of past time, it is virtually impossible to know everything about the past. Still, history is studied with an attempt to know the most significant aspects of the past. One way through which these aspects are organised is space, which is why there is the concept of African history. African history is defined by Phillip (2012) as a massive and intricate subject that has shaped the history of the continent through the footsteps of both men and women who have lived there from the dawn of history. Although Africa is quite diverse, African people also have distinct ways of living, as seen by their traditional music, dances, cultures, foods, farming, and other economic activities. The history of Africa can be traced back from between 200 000 and 300 000 years ago, with the emergence of early humans

(Brooks & McBreaty, 2000). African history has also gone through ancient history, days of kingdoms, days of colonialism, up to the current post-colonial period (Wyman, 2011). All this shows that African history is vast, making it a difficult task for the history teacher to know it all. However, it is still expected that history teachers in South Africa must have some historical literacy on African history. South Africa is part of the African continent and there are calls to increase content on African history in the curriculum. Therefore, it is important to study South African history teachers' content knowledge of African history.

## **1.2 Focus and Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the historical content knowledge of history teachers in African history. Thus, the phenomenon under focus is the teachers' content knowledge of African history. Here the purpose is to find out how much content history teachers have on African history topics that they teach at schools, and what they think about their levels of historical literacy.

## **1.3 Rationale and Motivation**

My personal rationale for doing this study stems from my experiences when I was still a learner at school. I noticed that my history teachers were not properly qualified. Most of these teachers were not qualified at all; and those who were qualified did not have teaching background of history. Upon reflection, I realised that, during my school days (during the early 1990s) any teacher, irrespective of their qualifications, could be assigned to teach history if there was shortage of history teachers. For me, this explained why some of these teachers lacked historical content knowledge, specifically knowledge of African history. Although they seemed to do well when teaching South African history, I noticed gaps in their teaching of African history whether it was in names of African leaders, or the dates on which events happened, together with the places of events. When we asked questions of interest about African



history, teachers lacked confidence and struggled to offer basic information on African history.

As a result of the above school history experiences, I felt that we were left with knowledge gaps. At university the knowledge gaps became clearer. I realised that I did not have enough historical knowledge. I was particularly concerned that these knowledge gaps included African history which I considered important. In fact, when my close friends debated on popular African leaders, the emancipation of African states, as well as the economies of various African countries, I could contribute very little due to lack of information pertaining to these particular topics. I realised that I had not received a good background in my high school education. My personal disadvantages made me conscious that history teachers in South Africa need sound content knowledge of African history.

My professional rationale for this study is based on the increased debates on the decolonisation and Africanisation of the school history curriculum in South Africa (Bada, 2010; Bam, 2018; Msila, 2007). In relation to school history, this means that African history should be considered important, demonstrating the importance of researching history teachers' content knowledge of African history. On its own, the concept of historical content knowledge is very important for history teachers as it reveals the foundation on which the teachers base their classroom practice (Bennet, 2014; Maranto, 2015). This study contributes to literature on historical content knowledge, contextualised within South Africa, particularly the case of the area of Mtubatuba in the northern part of the KwaZulu-Natal province. This is an area in which I am based, and which is little researched. Therefore, the voices of the history teachers in such areas need to be exposed in order to balance the exposure of teachers in different spaces.

African history is very important in our curriculum even though many consider it to be still colonised. This study is conducted within the current debates of whether history should be more Africanised or not since more topics are still European. The answer to this concern is that there is a need to increase the knowledge of African history through introducing more African history content in the school curriculum and for teachers to be knowledgeable about it. There is great need for indigenisation of school

history in South Africa so that Africans can take the lead in making a history more African.

#### **1.4 Critical Questions**

1. What is the level of selected history teachers' content knowledge of African history?
2. How do the selected history teachers view their content knowledge of African history?

#### **1.5 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the level of selected history teachers' content knowledge of African history.
2. To understand the selected history teachers' views about their content knowledge of African history.

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Scholars give various definitions of historical literacy, showing how it is very important for school history. According to Ravitch (1989), one has to acquire historical knowledge in order to be considered historically literate. This conception has since been added to, with Maposa and Wasserman (2009) arguing that a historically literate person needs to demonstrate competency in historical knowledge, historical understanding, historical method, historical consciousness, and historical language. This is a holistic understanding of historical literacy which covers constructing conceptual knowledge, using sources, and understanding the causes of inquiry (Eeden, 2012; Downey & Long, 2016; Offen, 2017). However, this study focuses on the aspect of content knowledge which now tends to be ignored while focusing on other aspects of historical literacy.

This study is significant because it helps South African history teachers to realise the importance of knowing African history, that is, knowing exactly where African people come from and how things have developed on the entire African continent. It also makes history teachers to see the need of filling some gaps with regards to the content knowledge needed for history teachers in African history. It also important for history teachers to show that they have content knowledge of history in general, so that teachers teach with confidence, thereby gaining trust from their learners and colleagues around them. Having content knowledge of African history is also helpful for teachers who must pass on the relevant and correct information to learners. History learners will benefit from this study and from information disseminated by their teachers. Learners will benefit when their teachers acknowledge their content gaps, improving their content knowledge. Teachers will also gain tips from other participants (history teachers), helping them to acquire additional information on improving various teaching methods.

### **1.7 Methods to be used**

The paradigm that I use for this study is the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm fits well with the study since its main focus is to understand the subjective nature of human experience and puts emphasis on action with meaning (Cohen, et al., 2018). In the interpretivist paradigm, the actions of a person are only meaningful as long as people can be able to understand those actions (Cohen et al, 2018). The study followed the qualitative approach and used the case study design. The participants were purposively selected and data were generated through a kind of aptitude test followed by focus group interviews. The data were then thematically analysed to come up with the findings.

### **1.8 Location of the Study**

This study was conducted in Mtubatuba, a rural area that lies in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. This area is under Mtubatuba Municipality

which itself is under the uMkhanyakude district. Mtubatuba is still a developing area and, as a result, it still lacks some basic services such as clean and piped water. The area does not yet provide job opportunities for all the people who live in it. There are insufficient industries providing jobs – job-seekers have to search for jobs in neighbouring places such as Richards Bay. Neither does Mtubatuba have leisure places that generate income, such as casinos and cinemas. One positive is that, since 1994, most households within Mtubatuba Municipality now have electricity – very few do not. Mtubatuba has a well-known heritage site called Isimangaliso Wetlands (formerly known as St. Lucia). A busy national road (N2) passes through it to neighbouring countries like Swaziland and Mozambique. Most of the schools in Mtubatuba are public schools in rural areas since the area has few townships.

### **1.9 Outline of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One, I provided an overview of the aspects that explain the relevance and necessity of the study. I provided the background to the study, so that the need to understand the exploration of history teachers' content knowledge of African history was contextualised. To accomplish this, I introduced the study in summary, then provided the focus and purpose of this study, the critical questions, explaining the rationale for and the significance of the study.

In Chapter Two, I will explore what scholars have said, establishing the gaps in both methodology and the footprint on the topic of historical literacy of history teachers. This review features both national and international literature on the content knowledge of history teachers. The founding factors of both professional and personal content knowledge of African history are debated. I also explain the conceptual framework for this study, which is historical literacy as content knowledge.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the research design and methodology used in the study. The research design, paradigm, research approach, methodology, data analysis, ethics, trustworthiness and limitations are discussed. In this chapter, all methodological choices are fully explained and justified.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the analysis of the data that was generated. It discusses and scrutinises the findings in response to each critical question. The presentation of the findings is given thematically; and is also guided by the conceptual framework explained in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter Four. The discussion refers to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the conceptual framework in order to make meaning of the findings. Scholars such as Sridah (2015) and Turan (2020) play a crucial role in this discussion. The discussion is also organised according to the themes presented in Chapter Four. The last part is the conclusion of this dissertation, in which the research questions are fully answered. The conclusion also offers a review of the dissertation, presents my methodological reflections, and discusses the limitations of the study. The dissertation is concluded with the provision of possible angles for further exploration from the knowledge gained from the research.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter provided an orientation to this study. Firstly, the background to the study was presented, explaining the history of South African education from colonisation and apartheid to curriculum changes such as Curriculum 2005, Outcomes Based Education (OBE), Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Focus and the purpose of the study were also identified. The rationale and motivation for the study were also explained. The critical questions and objectives of the study were also highlighted in this chapter as a way of showing what this study was trying to answer. The chapter further discussed the significance of the study where it was mentioned why it is important for a history teacher to have historical content knowledge. This chapter also identified the location of the study, which was Mtubatuba on the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The research methods were also summarised before the outline of dissertation was presented.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature that has been generated in relation to this study and the conceptual framework which guides this study. According to Hayward (2017) and McCombes (2021), a literature review is a survey and critical summary of scholarly sources published on a specific topic. A literature review is also defined as a comprehensive study and an interpretation of literature which addresses a certain topic (Aveyard, 2010). The purpose of a literature review is to provide an overview of current knowledge, allowing a researcher to identify relevant theories, methods, as well as gaps in the existing research (McCombes, 2021).

A conceptual framework is defined by Camp (2001) as the structure that the researcher believes can best explain the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied. Peshkin (1993) asserts that a conceptual framework is linked to the concepts, empirical research, and important theories that are used to promote and synthesise the knowledge of a researcher. For Swaen (2021) a conceptual framework defines the relevant variables for the study and shows how they may be related to one another. Although this is not always the case, a conceptual framework can be a visual representation that helps to show the expected relationship between cause and effect (Mulder, 2017). The purpose of a conceptual framework is to identify and clarify what the researcher already knows; and then help to connect such knowledge with many other aspects and influences in research (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). Another purpose of a conceptual framework is that it tries to find out why the topic matters; why the proposed design and methodology are appropriate, and whether they are sufficiently rigorous for the research study (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). Grant and Osonloo (2014) add that the purpose of a conceptual framework is to help give logical structure of connected concepts that help provide a picture of how ideas in the study relate to one another within the theoretical framework. These understandings show that the

conceptual framework emerges out of literature. This explains why this chapter deals with both literature and the conceptual framework.

The literature review in this chapter is presented in a thematic manner. A thematic literature review shows patterns of various ideas by scholars on the issues concerning this study. It helps to clearly analyse ideas from literature. The themes of this chapter are as follows: history teachers and their roles, concept of historical literacy, and content knowledge.

## **2.2 School History Curriculum Content in South Africa**

As a result of centuries of colonialism and Apartheid, school history in South Africa was dominated by Europeans as was the rest of the education system. The history curriculum was Eurocentric and dominated by European history (South African History Online, 2019). This means that Africans did not have access to their own history. African history was at the periphery; this means that knowledge of African history content was also low for both the teachers and learners.

After Apartheid ended in 1994, the government and other relevant organisations in the education sector decided on the content to be taught in South African schools. According to Chrisholm (2003), university-based intellectuals and teacher unions, such as the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), National Association of Professional Teachers Organisation in South Africa and the Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie, all participated in deciding on the content to be taught in schools after 1994. Jansen (2001) points out that the curriculum revision process by the stakeholders after 1994 was an attempt to redress the sexist, racist, and outdated content that had been in use during the Apartheid era. This confirms that the government of the day makes sure that it promotes its agenda through education policies. In this case the African National Congress (ANC) sought to promote its own political agenda of accommodating all South Africans by replacing old content with new content.

Since the end of Apartheid, there have been some remarkable changes in as far as the teaching of history and its curriculum in South Africa is concerned. Van Eeden (2010) notes that the new history curriculum in South Africa has been transformed in the new era from predominantly European to one more inclusive. Van Eeden (2010) further mentions that, according to Lawson, the new history curriculum has been made flexible: it now allows for Black history teachers to be accommodated, engaging with it freely. This shows that some positive changes have been effected in the post-Apartheid curriculum.

It should be mentioned that the post-Apartheid curriculum has not been fully transformed (Waetjen, 2005). However, although the history curriculum cannot be regarded as fully Afrocentric, some changes have been made. According to Samanga (2018), the appointment of a task team by the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa had somewhat to do with transforming the history curriculum to be Afrocentric. In fact, the task team appointed by Minister Angie Motshekga iterated that the minister had approved its recommendations. The minister stressed that the history curriculum was to be made Afrocentric, making it relevant to African learners (Sobuwa, 2019). This would mean that the learners would also develop more knowledge of African history; teachers should be equipped to teach it.

### **2.3 History Teachers and their Role**

As a profession, teaching has certain expectations of the teacher – this also applies to the teaching of history. There are thus certain characteristics and competences expected of the history teacher. The role of history teachers varies and is also unique to them. According to Gill (2012), history teachers should have a passion for investigating the past, which in turn can help shape the world. History teachers should be naturally inquisitive and take an interest in past events (Gill, 2012). History teachers should be actual historians, differing only in using school history to impact the learners. History teachers use the past in order to give meaning to the world in which people are living. Straus (2013) agrees with Gill, remarking that history teachers bring their past experiences, formal and informal knowledge to the classroom, thus helping



learners understand history better. This makes the study of history interesting, and gives meaning for the history learners.

Teaching history requires teachers to have special skills so that their teaching becomes effective. For example, Gill (2012) points out that history teachers need to possess skills of detailed planning, as they are responsible for the day-to-day classroom activities. Such planning may involve aspects such as organising lesson plans, collecting and designing lesson presentation, and also assessing the learners (Samoa, 2003; History Teacher Career Guide, 2018). Effective planning results in efficient and successful lessons (Samoa, 2003).

Gill (2012) adds that history teachers also need problem-solving as well as critical skills which they will foster in the learners. According to Straus (2013), the history teacher should be able to develop the learners' comprehension, critical thinking, and other skills by using primary sources. This may help learners improve their reading skills, and also improve their attention to documents as primary sources, using such in a more meaningful way. The History Career Guide (2018) supports this by saying that a history teacher encourages students to critically examine various points of view in order to prepare them for the possible challenges in the near future. This assists learners to become responsible citizens able to take informed decisions. Samoa (2003) concurs with the above-mentioned point by saying that a history teacher promotes the appreciation of learners' efforts. Learners should not be afraid to offer own ideas and views. This will prepare them to become responsible citizens, brave enough to take decisions about their lives.

History teachers must also be able to use the past and the present in order to make meaning of the future. This is what is commonly referred to as historical consciousness (Russen, 2003; Seixas, 2006). Gill (2012) notes that history teachers should have sharp minds that they can use to blend the past and the present so that they provide meaning about the future. Samoa (2003) supports this by saying that a history teacher should design activities that help learners develop a social conscience. The History Teachers' Career Guide (2018) supports this by saying that history teachers educate history learners about the events and lessons of history in order to relate them with their current events. This means that learners become able to relate deeply to the past taught by the history teacher. History learners develop the ability to comprehend

contemporary political and social debates (History Teachers Care Guide, 2018). Samoa (2003) agrees with this, insisting that a history teacher relates topics from the past to current national and international events. In this way, learners of history realise that studying history is not just about the past. It is about how the past can be used to relate to the present solutions or challenges. A history teacher therefore helps learners empathise with what happened in the past, relating such to their experiences.

Gill (2012) argues that a history teacher should be able to provide reliable and accurate information. This means that a history teacher becomes a reliable source to the learners. Straus (2013) agrees with Gill (2012) that, instead of relying solely on the textbook, a good history teacher searches for resources. The teacher provides many primary sources for learners to examine critically and engage with. This makes history lessons more interesting and beneficial to the learners. Some of the resources that the teacher can make use of include computers, the internet, videos, feature films, documentaries, slides, and local television stations (Lee, 2002; Samoa, 2003; Straus, 2013). As Lee (2002) and Samoa (2003) point out, history teachers should always try to be *au fait* with current changes, especially in terms of the use of resources. The use of various methods, especially involving technology, enables learners to access information in a differentiated way, some learners learning actively and visually (Lee, 2002; Samoa, 2003). For instance, the use of the World Wide Web helps learners of history gain access to the materials of history in a way that even history teachers themselves may have ever imagined. The web serves as a tool for history learners to use even if they are not at school (Lee, 2002). Straus (2013) adds that downloading information from websites helps learners develop critical skills in studying issues of the past, while providing learners with opportunities of studying history easily through technology. The history teachers can also use digital resources in the study of the past by means of primary source texts such as images and artefacts, constructed historical narratives and presentations (Lee, 2002). This technology usage may help provide many answers to learners' questions on history.

The history teacher should also engage in teaching and learning activities that are not limited to self and the class. For example, the history teacher can organise activities involving other schools. Samoa (2003) explains that the history teacher can organise with local schools activities such as history days which may include history quizzes,

historic dramas, concerts, poetry and songs and also student panel discussions on topical issues. Straus (2013) adds that the history teacher has to give learners activities such as projects to keep them motivated and learning. All these activities help learners to develop historical literacy. The expectation is that the history teacher should also be historically literate.

## **2.4 The Concept of Historical Literacy**

Scholars define historical literacy in many different ways. The first meaning of historical literacy is that one who is historical literate should have sufficient knowledge of history (Ravitch, 1989). A history teacher must have historical content knowledge before being considered historical literate. Keith (2016) supports this, maintaining that a history teacher should be able to transform academic knowledge of content so as to prepare learners for the future.

Taylor (2003) states that an historically literate individual should also possess particular historical skills. Bennet (2014) adds that effective history teachers should have the unique skills needed for historical inquiry, thus helping learners to conduct historical inquiry in the classroom. History teachers should have skills of those not historically literate. This includes being able to use past documents and artefacts in the study of history (Bennet, 2014; Nokes, 2010). Such props are important for historical literacy, working as evidence which supplies meaning to history. History teachers need therefore to be more knowledgeable on history. Van Eeden (2012) agrees with Baron (2001) by saying that there are tools such as videos, textbooks, images, internet resources, and activity and assessment materials that can improve historical literacy. These tools can assist history teachers to collect more information for their lessons, making content knowledge a benchmark for historical literacy. Offen (2017) also underscores historical literacy as the ability to learn about the past using sources and understanding the causes of inquiry. Monyane (1999) further argues that history learners who do not question any life circumstances may not be able to construct historical knowledge, or understand the evolution of reality. History learners should be able to make meaning from historical evidence, thus understanding history.

Besides content knowledge and skills, historical literacy is about the potential to use the past in order to construct conceptual knowledge. Downey and Long (2016) aver that a historically literate person must not simply be knowledgeable about the past, but must have the ability to help students construct conceptual knowledge. Breda (2009) supports this in that historical literacy helps teachers develop skills of understanding events in history, rather than simply knowing them. Historically literate people have a special way of understanding history informed by higher-order concepts. One may develop an in-depth understanding of time, since time is considered a higher order concept (Keith, 2016). Other concepts include historical significance, cause and consequence, change and continuity, and empathy (Taylor, 2003). All these concepts are important in terms of developing historical understanding and informing historical thinking.

Historians have increasingly tended to focus on the study of mass behaviour and beliefs, thereby looking at the everyday activities as well as the ideology and opportunities of ordinary individuals (Kaestle, 1985). All this relates to the aspect of historical literacy termed historical consciousness. Breda (2009) argues that historical consciousness relates to learners making links between the past, present, and future. Historical literacy can also be attained if a person has developed historical consciousness (Maposa & Wassermann, 2009). As noted in the previous section, this may improve historians' knowledge, allowing them to use time in their awareness of life experiences. According to Taylor (2003), historical consciousness may mean connecting the past with the self and also with the world today. In addition, Seixas (2006) refers to historical consciousness as the individual and collective understanding of the past, present, and future. This explains Foley's (2018) view that literacy today plays an important role in updating people on past events. Such knowledge should be combined with sense-making of current events, making meaningful sense of the world around. Harris and Bain (2011) remark that historical knowledge helps individuals to make connections between themselves and the world in which they live – such contributes to an individual's consciousness. Having historical consciousness implies that one must know about how things happen in the world.

The last aspect of historical literacy to be discussed here relates to communication. According to Lee (2011), students who are historically literate are fluent in

communicating history. A historically literate person has to be capable of giving information on past events while being fluent on the subject. Such fluency is not generalized language, but the language of history. Folay (2018) and Kaestle (1985) explain that literacy in history has helped develop the study of history through focusing on the (new peoples' lives) developments such as social status, gender and vocation, thus defining the field of social history. Communication is an important benchmark for historical literacy which an individual develops through the study of history.

The foregoing discussion on historical literacy reflects the different benchmarks for historical literacy depending on the time and space. All these benchmarks have been shown as important. However, this study will focus on the first benchmark, which is on the knowledge of historical content. To make sense of this concept, it is important to first discuss literature on content knowledge in general.

## **2.5 Content Knowledge**

It is not possible for teachers to know everything; however, they are expected to have certain basic knowledge. According to Ball et al. (2009), knowledge that teachers should have includes:

- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- Knowledge about educational values, purposes, and their philosophical and historical backgrounds
- Knowledge of subject content
- Knowledge of the curriculum and the materials used for teaching the subject
- Knowledge of pedagogical content and having a professional understanding of teaching.

The above five aspects are related, and have an ultimate bearing on teachers' content knowledge. Scholars view content knowledge as the basic knowledge that teachers should have in teaching effectively (Keith, 2016; Shulman, 1987). History teachers must therefore know history content to be considered historically literate. With adequate content knowledge of a subject comes mastery of the subject. Therefore,

the teacher becomes a reliable source for the learners and the entire community (Keith, 2016; Shulman, 1987).

One form of knowledge that teachers are expected to have is pedagogical content knowledge. Cochran (1986) defines pedagogical content knowledge as knowledge that is acquired by teachers that shows what they know about teaching and how they teach the subject matter. Teachers should be able to blend their knowledge of their subject with their method of teaching. According to Barret and Green (2009) pedagogical content knowledge implies effective teaching methods and mastery of the subject matter. In addition, Murray et al. (2017) define pedagogical content knowledge as two out of seven categories of content knowledge important for teacher knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge forms the basis for a teacher to display the skills of teaching; it shows teachers' knowledge of a subject.

There are important components of pedagogical content knowledge which good teachers need to understand. Cochran (1986) states that teachers should show a sound understanding of their social, political, cultural and physical environment. Teachers then avoid disturbing their learners while learning. Barret and Green (2009) support this by saying that a teacher may chose specific methods and information based on their understanding of the context. This may also help history teachers teach history in an effective way.

Teachers are unique being expected to have special information or knowledge that their learners do not usually possess. According to Shulman (1991), teachers have a special kind of knowledge in terms of selecting and adopting alternative ways of representing the subject matter that meets learners' needs. Therefore, teachers are important and serve as the source of information in line with the needs of the learners. Teachers have to also show that they are clear about the content knowledge that they deliver in their lessons. Teachers should have knowledge beyond the subject matter that they teach (Barry et al., 1991). Moyer et al. (2003) state that teachers should engage in projects that extend their history content, those projects also enhance the teachers' pedagogical skill. When the teaching becomes successful the students grasp more on the subject.

There are many advantages of subject teachers having strong pedagogical content knowledge. According to Westhoff and Polman (2001), a teacher with immense pedagogical content knowledge is able to pass information on to learners. Such teachers are also able to help learners to work with primary sources, as well as supporting claims with evidence. A teacher with sufficient pedagogical content knowledge teaches students more knowledge and strategies on responding to difficult tasks. Hofer and Swan (2006) state that history teachers need not only to know how to use historical documents but are also required to teach their learners how to analyse them. Harris and Bail (2011) emphasise that a history teacher is also required to use tools such as maps which are useful in contextualising past events within particular spaces. Westhoff and Polman (2008) support this by saying that a history teacher with a good pedagogical content knowledge will understand how to use both primary and secondary sources; this will help students understand the context of teaching historical content.

In order to keep on improving and updating their content knowledge, teachers must find useful resources. This has been made easier with the developments in technology, especially the internet which has a wealth of information (Westhoff & Polman, 2001). The teachers can also direct learners to other internet sources for more content. Hofer and Swan (2006) posit that history teachers should be able to use web-based digital archives in order to increase access to knowledge. Thus, the teachers can use technological facilities to create activities that link with the prior knowledge of their students (Moreira et al., 2017). In this way teachers may improve teaching styles which may be used to strengthen their subject knowledge and that of the learners. As a result, the teacher becomes flexible and confident to teach students with different abilities effectively (Barret & Green, 2009). In other words, obtaining pedagogical content knowledge can be achieved through practice. As Puo (2009) points out, pedagogical content knowledge depends on teachers' everyday duties. This shows that experience in teaching everyday also helps the teachers gain more pedagogical content knowledge.

Pedagogical content knowledge can also be enhanced through knowledge of the curriculum. Evens et al. (2015) argue that developing pedagogical content knowledge adds a component called knowledge of curriculum. This knowledge helps teachers

become experts at their subjects. In this way teachers have to have pedagogic content knowledge so that they deliver lessons effectively. Teachers can be successful in doing this as they are professionals who are well trained (Turgut, 2017). Teachers need therefore to undergo effective training to teach effectively.

Teachers need always to work hard to upgrade their content knowledge. Mann (2014) points out that, although technology can provide us with more information, it still does not provide teachers with all the information they need. Teachers do not know everything (Mann, 2014); therefore they should rely on various ways of enriching their content knowledge.

Besides training, teachers sometimes rely on their previous memories to enhance their content knowledge. Evens et al. (2015) point out that teachers' memories of past education are an important source of their content knowledge. Whatever teachers have learned in the past, either in class or outside is important for their content knowledge. Teachers start gaining knowledge as early as while at school, or even before this time. However, teachers need to be updated in content knowledge to be in line with the needs of today.

A teacher's lack of pedagogical content knowledge affects the learners, who then do not acquire necessary information. According to Kleickman et al. (2012), pedagogical content knowledge is a vital component which affects the progress of the learners should a teacher lack such. Pedagogical content knowledge, related to school history in this study, offers historical literacy.

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework: Historical literacy as content knowledge**

As noted earlier on in this chapter, there are benchmarks which a history teacher should obtain in order to be considered historically literate. According to Maposa and Wassermann (2009), the benchmarks for historical literacy include knowledge, conceptual understanding, source work, historical consciousness, and historical language. The above authors argue that one cannot be fully historically literate if these benchmarks have not been attained. As noted by Lee (2011), historical literacy is the



goal of history education. Downey (2015) suggests that historical literacy is about understanding the aims of history education. All learners study school history so that they become historically literate. For one to be a history teacher, one must gain historical literacy through one's education up to teacher training (Harris and Bain, 2011).

One cannot understand historical literacy without establishing its components as explained earlier in this chapter. In this study, I focus on historical content knowledge as a benchmark of historical literacy. This study is premised on history teachers having historical literacy so as to help learners also to develop historical literacy. History teaching requires that history teachers are knowledgeable on their subject matter. Maranto (2015) remarks that when history is taught by teachers who have knowledge of a subject it becomes more interesting and well developed. Monte-Sano (2011) adds that teachers need not only to know about people and events in history – they also need to know how knowledge is created, revised, tested, and challenged. Content knowledge will help history teachers teach their students quality history, building upon the other benchmarks of historical literacy.

Although not easy to state exactly how much content a history teacher should know in order to be regarded as historically literate, some scholars, such as Sridah (2015), Lee (2011) and Downey and Long (2009) believe that a history teacher should know a set amount of history as a minimum to be historically literate. In this section, this knowledge will be summarised as knowledge of historical places, historical figures, historical events, and historical dates. These four aspects comprise the conceptual framework for this study.

### **2.6.1 Knowledge of historical places**

Law (2019) mentions that knowing about places in history is very important as it help in giving the correct account of events. Dasgerdi and De Luca (2019) supports Law by saying that having sufficient knowledge about various historical places is needed in order for one to be able to make meaningful comparisons between places studied in history. There were many places that were recorded in history where important events happened in history. For instance, in African history, a place called Sterkfontein, near a town called Krugersdorp is considered important for the profusion of fossilised bones

that were found there (Reader's Digest, 1992). This place can be compared to Olduvai Gorge in Kenya and the Awash Valley in Ethiopia where similarly fossilised bones were found (Lonely Planet, 2018). Other similar places in South Africa are the caves of Kromdraai and Swartkrans. These examples show that there are different types of historical places. The places may be continents, regions, countries, towns, rural areas, and even specific locations such as the caves and valleys identified above. According to this study's conceptual framework, it would be expected that a historically literate individual would have some knowledge on these different types of historical places.

### **2.6.2 Knowledge of historical figures**

The literature reveals that the study of characters in history is important and valuable. For instance, Scott (2009) comments that knowing about characters in the study of history is important – it brings history to life – those studying it can relate to the various characters. Pranomo et al. (2020) support Scott's outlook – that knowing about characters in history also helps to implant values into learners, since the characters may be heroes or villains. Pranomo et al. (2020) further mention that learning about heroes helps motivate students to achieve humanistic and empathetic understanding of history.

Certain characters played very important roles in constructing the history of Africa. One character who is often mentioned in African history, Mansa Musa of Mali, who is well known for his pilgrimage to Mecca, accompanied by bodyguards, showing never-seen-before opulence. According to Ham (2008), King Kamkan Mansa Musa is viewed as one of the greatest of all African kings, and is therefore a very significant historical character. It would therefore be expected that a historically literate history teacher would have content knowledge on the historical character of Mansa Musa – a significant character of African history. As argued by Shaw (2010), historical events without the connections with people cannot be regarded as the domain of history or historical events. This means that history teachers and learners should know both powerful people like Mansa Musa and ordinary people in past societies.

### **2.6.3 Knowledge of historical events**

Events are one of the most important aspects of history. Scholars write about events so that what they write about history becomes meaningful. According to Joel (2020), historians are usually interested in knowing about events, thereby analysing them so that they know how things happened in the past. In other words, without historical events, history would not exist. Shaw (2010) adds that knowing about events in history helps us to understand that an event happens once, and it therefore cannot be repeated. For example, the Reader's Digest (1992) comments on events that happened in history, many of which enrich the history of South Africa. One significant historical event in African history is the first contact between the Khoikhoi and the Europeans in a place today called Mossel Bay. This later led to both exchange of goods and the killing of the Khoikhoi as the Cape was established, marking the beginning of colonisation in South Africa. Other significant events in African history include the rise of Mohammed Ali of Egypt of 1811 to 1847, the Mfecane period from 1816 to 1840, European conquest and African response from 1885 to 1900, national liberation movements between 1952 to 1962 and the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 in Ethiopia (Toyin, 2002).

#### **2.6.4 Knowledge of historical dates**

The literature reveals that knowing dates in the study of history is important. Sridah (2015) argues that history teachers must have knowledge of dates and places in history. McGabhoru (2020) adds that knowing dates of events helps individuals understand the events better. The knowledge of dates has sometimes been criticised as mere memorization which makes history boring. According to Harold Kingsberg Reader (2015), the focus on names, places, people and dates in studying history sometimes detracts from the subject. It becomes less interesting and unnecessarily difficult, some focusing on dates for their own sake. This implies that some scholars do not regard knowing names and dates as the basis of making one historically literate.

However, Turan (2020) argues that knowing dates still plays a very important part in informing teaching methods – chronological thinking forms the basis of the science of history. Placing dates in the correct sequence and chronology helps a history teacher to give good accounts of when things happened in the past. Sridah (2015) also says that knowing about dates helps an individual to study historical processes in order to analyse them on the basis of facts. This means that knowing dates of events helps

one to locate the information correctly. Some historical dates are exact while others are estimates. According to Kochhar (2015) knowing exact dates in history should still be considered as evidence of being historically knowledgeable. Although this cannot be regarded as enough information for a history teacher to know, dates still form part of history knowledge. As Harold Kingsberg Reader (2015) states, knowing about who and what came before does not only help one gain knowledge about history, but it also helps one understand the way which events happened at a particular time.

### **2.6.5 Summary of the conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework adopted for this study is explained above. It conceptualises historical literacy as a form of content knowledge that is taught history. This implies that a history teacher should have content knowledge in order for him or her to be considered historically literate. Content knowledge is also important for a history teacher, enabling the teaching of learners with competence. While acknowledging that there are other benchmarks for historical literacy, the main argument is that a historically literate teacher should have knowledge of historical places, historical figures, historical events, and historical dates. This can then be applied to content knowledge of African history, or any other history for that matter.

## **2.7 Evaluation of Content Knowledge**

From the literature reviewed above, it is evident that historical literacy can be considered crucial for history teachers as well as history learners at schools. What is quite contentious is whether and how an individual's historical literacy can be determined. Mann (2014) argues that teachers cannot possibly know everything, which is why they are encouraged to be lifelong learners. Can the determination of historical literacy therefore be viewed in a dichotomous sense, one either having it or not. An alternative is to view literacy as on a sliding scale, with levels of historical literacy.

My literature search did not reveal any scholars who conceptualise levels of historical literacy on a sliding scale. Maposa and Wassermann refer to benchmarks of historical literacy, but these are conceptualised as individual competences that are then put together as building blocks of historical literacy. These building blocks have already been discussed in this chapter. This study focuses only on the building block of historical content knowledge.

A simple conceptualisation would be to adapt common levels such as below average, average, above average, and excellent (Collins English Dictionary, 2000). The below-average level would mean being at the bottom of the cognitive ladder (Hart, 2019). The average level would refer to the typical or normal amount or quality of information that a person has; while the above-average level would be higher or better than a person's normal knowledge (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Finally, the excellent level would mean the state of excelling, or superiority performance (Collins English Dictionary, 2000). While these levels seem straightforward, it would still be debatable to determine the standards for each of these levels.

An alternative way of determining historical literacy can also be adapted from Kaiser and Willander (2005). These authors offered ways of rating mathematical literacy. The two scholars say that there are five levels of mathematical literacy. The lowest level is called illiteracy, which is a manifestation of ignorance of basic mathematical concepts and methods (Kaiser & Willander, 2017). Such could be applied to historical literacy. One deemed illiterate shows ignorance of basic historical content, that is events, places, people, and dates.

The second level, according to Kaiser and Willander (2005), is called nominal literacy. Nominal literacy rests on the individual's minimal understanding of mathematical concepts, topics, or terms, characterised by the usage of naïve theoretical explanations as well as misconceptions. This rating method can equally be applied to someone with a below average level of historical literacy,

The third level of mathematical literacy is functional literacy. At this level, a person can use scientific and technological vocabulary, albeit confined to a particular activity or a need such as defining a term or text (Kaiser & Willander, 2017). While this conceptualisation does not apply to the nature of historical literacy in this study, the

term functional literacy can be adapted to refer to an individual who has average historical literacy. This level of literacy enables the individual to be satisfactorily functional in the history classroom and in society.

Kaiser and Willander's (2017) fourth level is conceptual and procedural literacy. These dimensions of literacy consist of developing understanding of how conceptual parts of a discipline relate to the whole discipline. As is the case with the definition of functional literacy, this level cannot be applied directly to historical literacy. However, for this study, I adapt the vocabulary of the term procedural literacy to refer to an individual with above-average historical literacy.

The fifth and last level is multidimensional literacy. According to Kaiser and Willander (2017), this is the highest level of literacy, going beyond vocabulary, conceptual schemes, and procedural methods. I also do not borrow the direct meaning of this concept. This means that I am going to use this level in order to define the level that a historical literate person may show or have as a way of being excellent in historical content knowledge. I apply this term to an individual with excellent historical literacy. Literacy becomes multidimensional in an individual excellent in knowledge on all the dimensions of content in history, such as knowledge of dates, events, persons and places.

It should be noted that these levels are relatively subjective and are not easy to measure. However, one can use them to make meaning of the nature of the content knowledge individuals show. These levels are, therefore, used in this study to make sense of the selected history teachers' levels of historical literacy.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The literature I have presented in this chapter reveals that history teachers need advanced knowledge to gain high levels of historical literacy. Being a historically literate teacher helps learners of history to benefit from the teaching and learning process. These history learners can also become advanced in their knowledge. The main argument in this chapter was to equate this content knowledge to the concept of

historical literacy. The most important aspects of this knowledge were identified to be knowledge of historical places, historical figures, historical events and historical dates. The knowledge of such aspects can then be applied to the study of African history. While acknowledging that history teachers cannot possibly know all of African history content, there must be a minimum level of knowledge acceptable for someone a teacher who is assisting learners to gain historical literacy. The knowledge of African history is especially important since South Africa is part of the African continent and is still working on Africanising its history curriculum.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter was the literature review. It dwelt on what scholars have written in relation to the study focus, which is on South African teachers' content knowledge of African history. The chapter also provided the conceptual framework on content knowledge as historical literacy. This chapter explains the research design and methodology that I used for this study. It is divided into the following sections: research design, paradigm, research approach, methodology, data analysis, ethics, trustworthiness, and limitations.

#### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

A paradigm is the abstract beliefs and principles that shape or influence the way a researcher sees the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). These beliefs and principles are important for the researcher to access so as to conduct the study appropriately. The principles give an indication of the perspective and background of a researcher. The paradigm is therefore the lens used by a researcher to view the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Therefore, the paradigm gave my study clear direction on what to do and how to do it. The paradigm helped me as a researcher to use appropriate methods in generating and analysing the data.

The paradigm that I applied in this study is the interpretivist paradigm. I decided to use this paradigm because it fit well with this particular study. The interpretivist paradigm is defined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (Cohen et al., 2018) as a paradigm whose main focus is to understand the subjective nature of human experience. Cohen et al. (2018) also mention that the interpretive paradigm places emphasis on action, which is behaviour with meaning done intentionally and with future orientation.

In the interpretivist paradigm, the actions of a person are only meaningful as long as people are able to understand those actions (Cohen et al., 2018). Gaining information



about the participants in a study helps to make meaning of their actions. Under the interpretivist paradigm, theory is not expected to dictate the results in the study – the theory should follow the processes of the study (Cohen et al., 2018). The researcher must work in line with the understanding and experience of the participants in order to build a theory. This study examines the content knowledge of history teachers on African history. I therefore found this paradigm most relevant to my study. The selected history teachers' content knowledge on the teaching of history is influenced by experiences.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The research approach that I used for this study was qualitative in nature. A qualitative research approach clearly describes the purpose of the research which helps the researcher to keep focus (Trochin, 2006). The qualitative research approach is complex and changing. Such makes research a contested field full of a number of methodologies and practices (Punch, 2009). The qualitative approach comprises various methods that can be applied (Punch, 2009). According to Patton and Cohran (2002), the qualitative research approach aims to understand some aspects of social life; and (its methods rather than numbers as data?). Qualitative research addresses, among other things, perspectives of both professionals and patients (Patton & Cohran, 2002).

In the qualitative approach, the researcher's role is to gain a holistic overview of the context being studied. Such involves aspects such as its logic, arrangements, explicit and implicit rules (Punch, 2009). Punch (2009) adds that, under the qualitative research approach, the investigator attempts to capture the data on the perceptions of local actors from the inside. Such capturing uses a process of (deep attentiveness of emphatic understanding??) of the topic being studied. Mcleod (2017) supports this in stressing that the aim of qualitative research is to understand social reality of both individuals and groups as well as their cultures. A researcher may get to know the participants such that this familiarity will facilitate the research process. The researcher, under the qualitative research approach, is crucial to the study being undertaken (Punch, 2009). In the qualitative approach, a researcher explains why and

how a certain phenomenon or behaviour occurs in a particular context (Mcleod, 2017). Therefore, a researcher using the qualitative approach tends to explore some unclear aspects in a study. Teherani (2015) describes the qualitative approach as a way of focusing on the events of interests and outcomes of those interests studied from the perspectives of the participants. This fit well with this study. I generated data after having communicated with the participants on the purpose of the study, creating a good rapport with them.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The research design is about all the issues that I dealt with in planning and executing the study, including reporting, as well as publishing the results of the study (Punch, 2009). The research design could also be considered as basic planning of a research study in terms of strategy, conceptual framework, the questions included in the study, and the tools used for collecting and analysing data (Punch, 2009). The chosen research design for this study is the case study. Maree (2017) defines a case study as a strategic way of describing a particular item of interest. Cohen et al. (2011) further defines a case study as a study of occurrence that is repeatedly created in order to demonstrate a general principle that is in action. Therefore, it was appropriate to use the case-study design in this study. The main focus was to examine ways of describing history teachers who have knowledge of African history.

I decided to choose the case study research design for various reasons. According to Maree (2017) a researcher in a case study is more concerned with the voices or ideas of a group, rather than an individual participant. In this study, the group under focus was history teachers that teach history in the FET phase. These teachers served as a reliable source of information needed for a study. History teachers were important in being able to reveal information on their content knowledge of African history.

Another characteristic of a case study, according to Cohen et al. (2011), is that the researcher helps readers to understand how complicated theories and ideas may work as a unit. Case-study research tries to answer research questions like why and how things happen the way they do. Case studies usually offer answers to how and why

questions (Cohen et al, 2011). This made the case-study design appropriate for this study because of the how questions that needed to be answered. The case in this study is content knowledge, being the main focus of the study. The study explores the levels of content knowledge of history teachers on their subject. The study intends to give answers on levels of content knowledge history teachers have in African history.

### **3.5 Methodology**

The main methods relate to sampling, data generation, and data analysis. Cohen et al. (2018) aver that methodology refers to the methods used by researchers in generating data. These ways become the most important parts of doing research. The main aim of methodology is to help people understand the research process itself in the broadest terms, not as the scientific inquiry (Cohen et al., 2018).

It is therefore important to note that the method of data generation for this study is not ethnographic and I have also inserted a table showing the details of the participants. The two methods of data collection called individual interviews and focus group discussion were used in this study.

#### **3.5.1 Sampling**

Sampling is the method I used to select a certain group of history teachers for data generation. Cohen et al. (2018) define sampling as a method through which researchers choose a certain small group that represents a huge population. Since this was the case, I did not need to interview all history teachers in South Africa – I chose a particular group of teachers from Mtubatuba circuit who represented history teachers. This type of sampling is called purposive sampling; it is appropriate for qualitative research, thus it was selected (Palys, 2008 & Punch, 2009). Purposive sampling consists of selecting candidates for a specific purpose. According to Etken et al. (2016), purposive sampling uses a system of selecting the participants across a broad spectrum of a topic of the study. Etken et al. (2016) add that purposive sampling is effective especially when the sample pool is small. This was relevant to my study –

I used a small number of history teachers selected from the Mtubatuba circuit. Punch (2009) defines purposive sampling as a well-planned kind of sampling with a certain purpose in mind. In order for this study to be successful, I needed current history teachers who were able to relate what they teach to what was needed by the study, which was content knowledge of African history.

In this study, only history teachers who were available on Mtubatuba circuit were interviewed. It was easy for me to select these history teachers because, as a history teacher myself, I know where some of them work; and we often meet at our history circuit meetings. I therefore communicated with the subject advisors responsible for the circuit. I asked them for permission to meet a certain number of history teachers to inform them of the study and the data-generation process, asking whether they would be interested. I settled for a sample of ten history teachers in order to gain rich, quality, yet manageable data. The ten teachers I chose were from these schools: Mgwazeni High School, Nomathiya High School, Mtuba Christian Academy, Nkodibe High School, Mchakwini High School, Nkosana High School, Umfolozi High School, Nkombose High School, Mehlokubheka Secondary School and Madwaleni High School. These teachers comprised of both males and females respectively. I therefore chose one history teacher per school. The reason why I chose these teachers was because they were currently teaching history in their schools. These teachers were also willing to participate in the study and were also available to be part of the study.

### **3.5.2 Data generation**

For data generation, I used materials such as pictures for African leaders and maps for African countries, the CAPS history document, and history textbooks. These items are props not only for answering the basic questions, but for elicitation of discussion amongst the participants. Maposa & Wassermann (2009) report that Ravitch (1989) used Scholastic Aptitude Tests in the USA in testing the knowledge of history learners. Although this was used to test learners' knowledge, it was relevant to my study – I was perusing the content knowledge of selected history teachers.

I decided to ask questions informed by my conceptual framework, which focuses on the knowledge of historical events, historical dates, historical events, and historical places. Using a conceptual framework helped me as a researcher to make generalised

conclusion about teachers' different levels of literacy. Maposa & Wassermann (2009) articulate that Hirsch et al. (1991) argue that history students must have basic knowledge on geographical maps, famous people's names, historical events, and patriotic books. One can test the knowledge of individuals on history by using these materials. In this study I also used various African history sources in order to check how much content history teachers know about their subject. Maposa & Wassermann (2009) further say that for Taylor (2003) history learners should learn how to use items like documents, artefacts, and graphics in order to conduct historical reasoning. I therefore used maps, historical images, and a list of African countries that had gained independence, in order to test the knowledge of history teachers on African history.

I also used a focus-group discussion to gain information from the participants. Maree (2007) comments that group discussion always produces good results in allowing participants to give their views freely. Such encourages participants to voice their opinions, helping a researcher find the answers to probing questions. Seale et al. (2008) agree with Maree, intimating that focus groups work best when participants are given a certain topic to discuss, thereby exchanging their differing views about their daily lives. Cohen et al. (2018) agrees with the two scholars that a focus group allows the participants to control the discussion by sharing their views; and this leaves the researcher following the process rather than controlling it. Again, this may mean that focus-group discussion helps participants to communicate and to know each other better. Such an approach allows the participants to work together as a unit; it also helps to develop a good working relationship.

In a focus-group discussion, the participants gain the opportunity to share ideas. Maree (2007) supports this, indicating that a focus group allows participants to build on each other participant's ideas, thereby providing in-depth interviews for the research study. This may mean that focus-group discussion plays an important role in helping a researcher to gather significant amounts of data. Cohen et al. (2018) agree that focus groups allow participants to share their previous experiences – this adds more data to the study. The research process thus produces good results for the study as a whole.

Focus-group discussion is a research method with some form of structure. Maree (2007) insists that a focus-group discussion begins with easier questions, introducing

the more complex ones towards the end. This kind of structure may allow a research process to flow without many difficulties, while providing the researcher with the relevant data. Cohen et al. (2018) add that, in a focus group discussion, a researcher has to be very skilful as a facilitator as well an overseer of the study. A good and skilful facilitator in a focus group enhances the research process; and this may produce good results for the study.

Focus-group discussion may include both friends and people that are not related, depending on the purpose of the study. Cohen et al. (2018) posits that focus group works successfully if it has participants that do not have a particular relationship. If participants are not close to one another, this could add to the success of the study. In agreeing with the above, Seale (2008) remarks that a focus-group discussion succeeds when the participants have different views, lead to interesting data being generated. A more interesting and successful focus group is one adopting participants who are relative strangers. This can help produce good data for the study itself. My participants may be history teachers in the same district; however, they are colleagues and acquaintances, rather than friends.

The second part of the interview was when I used a focus-group discussion in commenting on the participants' answers, asking what they thought about their answers. I audio-recorded all the proceedings of the focus-group discussion. I had a one-day session whereby I firstly had the individual interviews and then the focus group discussion at Nkodibe High School. I did this after school in order to ensure that the sessions did not interfere with the duties of teachers at their schools and each session was an hour. Fortunately, the participants found it easy to come to the venue since they all owned cars. I also ensured that the following COVID 19 protocols were observed: all participants wore masks, there was a sanitiser that was provided for participants to sanitise their hands, there was a scanner which I used to scan the temperature for all participants and there was a 1.5 metre social distancing that separated the participants as they were seated in the interview room. The interview room was properly fumigated before and after the interview was held. I ensured that the participants did not infect each other during the focus group discussion.

### **3.5.3 Data analysis**

For this research I used the data-analysis method known as content analysis. I chose content analysis because it fit well with my study, its purpose being to elicit the content knowledge of history teachers on African history. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) maintain that content analysis is used to give meaning to the content of a text. Therefore, I tried to give meaning to the content of the generated data, transcribing such to text.

According Cohen et al. (2018) ten steps are used to analyse qualitative data through content analysis. However, I used eight steps, the first entailing defining the research questions to be addressed. Cohen et al. (2018) refer to the precise knowledge a researcher is demanding from the text to be analysed. I had already created key research questions at the beginning of the study. I therefore returned to the questions to see whether they related to the data generated. The second step was defining the population from which the units of text were to be sampled (Cohen et al., 2018). This referred to the people or participants included in the focus-group discussion. The nature of the study determined that the population would comprise history teachers in South Africa, particularly those in Mtubatuba circuit. The third step, according to Cohen et al. (2018), involves defining the sample to be included in the study. As explained earlier, I used purposive sampling to select ten history teachers.

The fourth step that I considered for this study was defining the content of the context of generation of the document. This means the process of making the content of the document into easily accessible or comprehensible. For Cohen et al. (2018), this step is about examining factors such as how the material was generated for the study, who participated, who was present, whether the participants were willing to participate, and whether the data was reported or recorded accurately. I explained the whole procedure of my study to the participants, complying with this stricture. Issues of willingness of the participants are explained in Section 3.6. For Cohen et al. (2018), the fifth step is about defining the units of analysis, which can be a phrase, a sentence, word, paragraph, people, and themes, as well as the whole text. I considered this step as I completed a thorough analysis of data. I made sure that I analysed everything used in the data such as words, paragraphs, sentences, themes, and the whole text.

Step number six, according to Cohen et al. (2018), is about deciding the codes to be used in the analysis of the study. Cohen et al. (2018) purport that scholars like Hammersley and Alkinsson (1983) find that the data should be read several times until

the researcher becomes familiar with such. These scholars believe that this approach helps the researcher to know how the participants relate to one another and the things that they say and do together. I used this step since I analysed everything happening in the data generation. The seventh step that I considered when doing content analysis was constructing the categories for analysis (Cohen et al., 2018). These comprise the main groupings of constructs or key features of the text that show links between the units of analysis. The categories were merged to develop themes that responded to the key research questions. The eighth step of content analysis as posited by Cohen et al. (2018) is summarising. Here the researcher writes a summary of the key factors researched. This summary became the presentation of findings that are captured in Chapter Four.

### **3.6 Ethical Issues**

I considered ethical issues for this study as they form a crucial part of research success and trustworthiness. Jen (2006) points out that ethical approval must be obtained from the relevant ethics committee if one is conducting studies that involve people. I complied by gaining approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee before conducting research on the targeted history teachers. I also had to gain permission from the gatekeepers or principals to work with history teachers from their schools. Cohen et al. (2018) state that a researcher must obtain informed consent from the participants. This protects them, and respects their right to self-determination, thereby making a participant responsible for anything that might go wrong in the research. Fouka and Montzorou (2011) support Cohen, saying that informed consent is given by an individual in research. The participant signs an agreement showing that he fully understands and is clear about what he signs for. I also prepared an informed consent form which I used to obtain consent from the prospective participants.

Another ethical issue that I considered was that of confidentiality in making sure that no names of participants were published. Cohen et al. (2018) mentions that confidentiality is important in research. This implies that information by the participant is undisclosed, identity remaining an unknown in the study. Fouka and Montzorou (2011) concur that confidentiality in research is about the management of private



information to protect the identity of the study participants. Fouka and Montzorou (2011) add that confidentiality means that participants in the study are free to give to or withhold information from anyone they choose. Participants have a right to choose to whom that they disclose information, no matter how dangerous or innocuous that information may be. Cohen et al. (2018), that all the promises made during the study need to be kept for the protection of the participant. In sticking to the principles of ethics I also made sure that all the information obtained from the participants remained confidential. Privacy was therefore one of the components of ethical consideration in a research study. Cohen et al. (2018) remind that privacy is a basic need that is equal to self-determination in research. Again, Fouka and Montzorou (2011) agree with Cohen et al., in that privacy gives the individual the right or freedom to private information which can be withheld from or disclosed to other people. I extended privacy in my study by making ensuring that the participants were comfortable to participate in the study. The entire data-generation process remained private.

Another aspect that I considered for my study was anonymity. According to Cohen et al. (2018), anonymity must be considered in a research study. Fouka and Montzorou (2011) agree with Cohen that a participant's identity is safe when the responses in research cannot be linked with anyone's identity. For Cohen et al. (2018), anonymity is when any information by the participant remains unknown – it does not reveal identity. I have ensured that any information provided in the study remains anonymous in that the identity of participants has been kept unknown. When presenting and analysing findings I used letters instead of names of participants, in order to maintain anonymity. Finally, I made it a point that the results of the study were available to anyone that needed these, including the participants of the study. This refers to the concept of beneficence, whereby the participants get to partake of the benefits of the study. I also made sure that everyone participated in the study with the full understanding of the study end results. Participants were alerted to their right to withdraw at any time.

### 3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is important in research – it makes research reliable, and its results become believable. Loh (2013) says that trustworthiness must be regarded as important, ensuring the high quality of the study. This means that the chosen methods of generating data can help to guarantee trustworthiness in research.

Shenton (2004) says that, for Lincoln and Guba, trustworthiness is achieved through important factors of credibility. I made sure that the study was credible; meaning that it tested what it was intended to test. I made sure that the study succeeded in finding out information pertaining to the African history content knowledge. Cheik and Shutt (2012) define credibility as showing how truthful the findings of the research being done by the researcher are. Credibility is important in a research study. Cheik and Shutt (2012) aver that, for a qualitative research to show that the findings are credible, it should use triangulation. I did this by asking specific questions, ensuring that the results obtained responded to the key research questions. I used triangulation in this study since I used both individuals and a focus-group discussion. Lambert et al. (2008) mention that the combination of individual and focus-group discussions produces good results in an interview. The two further state that using this method in triangulation helps to enhance trustworthiness in the study (Lambert et al., 2008). Similarly, Carter et al. (Carter & Nurs, 2014) remark that the use of individual interview and focus-group discussions are used as an example of data-source triangulation in a qualitative research. For Carter et al. (2014) triangulation means the multiple methods or data sources used in qualitative research in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Triangulation has also been seen as a qualitative research strategy used to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter & Nurs, 2014). Likewise, I asked participants first to answer questions as individuals; later on getting involved in a focus-group discussion. The participants had to answer questions based on African history.

I also made sure that the study that I was conducting was reliable. Cohen et al. (2018) contend that precision and accuracy are some of the concerns of researchers when doing research. I therefore made sure that the methods and findings used in the study would be able to produce similar results even if they were tested for future studies. This was confirmed by Cohen et al. (2018), saying that a reliable tool in research helps

to bring same results for same participants even if used many times. Cohen et al. (2018) add that, in cases where a researcher uses two groups with similar characteristics simultaneously, for example, participants of the same age group or gender, the results obtained should be the same for both groups. I only used one group consisting of both males and female participants. The participants were teachers from high schools that all offer history as one of the teaching subjects. The age group for these teachers was between the late 20s and 50s. The reason of choosing these teachers was because they teach history from grade 10 to grade 12. They were also very keen to participate in the study. Instruments used were therefore reliable for the study as they managed to bring about similar results. Cohen et al. (2018) comment that reliability stems from a researcher being fully prepared when coming to research powerful people who may pose questions that can test his knowledge about the study. Since I was collecting data from selected history teachers, I had to make sure that I came prepared. Whatever I discussed with them would foster trust in me as a researcher. I had therefore to display to them that I knew a lot about the focus of the study, which is content knowledge of African history.

### **3.8 Limitations**

This study, as with any other study, had its own limitations. However, I found ways of reducing their effects. Some of the history teachers found it challenging to participate in the study, especially when the focus-group discussion was supposed to happen towards the end of the year. Some were not available as they were busy preparing learners' reports for the last term. Some would be busy preparing to leave for marking the final examinations, while some were even busy with year-end social occasions. In overcoming such challenges, I had to personally contact the prospective participants in order to explain to them all the information about the study. I also contacted the leaders in the nearby education department such as the circuit managers, subject advisors, and the principals of the schools of the teachers that I was targeting for the study. I also had to consult with the subject advisors so that they communicated with the history teachers to clarify points about the study. In some cases, I had to personally to speak with prospective participants asking them to sacrifice their time so that they could attend the focus-group discussion.

### **3.9 Research Positionality**

I am a history teacher who teaches at Umfolozi High School and have been in the teaching field for 16 years. I know the participants from the workshops and this helped me as I found no difficulty when recruiting them for data generation. I therefore consider myself as an insider in this study. Knowing the participants was an advantage for me as it made them to easily understand my request. As our schools are in the same circuit, I found it easy to visit schools while I had to ask for a gatekeepers' (principals') permission. The principals granted a permission to work with their teachers after explaining the details of the study. I had to make sure that the issue of confidentiality was discussed even before the teachers could sign an informed consent so as to make them feel comfortable about the study.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the important components of this study's research design and methodology. I also broke down each of these components and explained them in detail, justifying why they were chosen. I made clear all the steps that I took especially in the sampling, data generation, and data-analysis processes, showing how I considered issues of ethics and trustworthiness. I used the Department of Education Ethical Approval Letter to ask for permission from the Department of Education to conduct my research at schools. The University of KwaZulu-Natal ethical approval letter allowed me to conduct research on human beings which in this case were history teachers. I recruited history teachers to gain consent from teachers to be part of the study. The gatekeepers' permission letter was used to ask school principals to allow me to work with their teachers. Finally, the informed consent letter was used to ask teachers to sign agreement to participate in the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The last chapter explained the research design and methodology that I used for the study. This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of data that I generated from the participants. I will present the findings by answering the key research questions of the study, which, are as follows: What is the level of selected history teachers' content knowledge of African history? How do the selected history teachers view their content knowledge of African history? As explained in Chapter Three, I will organise the findings into themes and sub-themes in order to answer the key research questions.

As a way of introducing participants I will use the table below in order to give a clear picture of who they were.

#### Biographical details of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Schools where they teach	Race	School type
A	29	Male	BA Degree and PGCE	Nkodibe High	African	High School
B	45	Female	BA Degree and HDE	Umfolozi High	African	High School
C	50	Male	B Paed	Mtuba Christian	African	High School
D	48	Male	Bachelor of Social Science	Mgwazeni High	African	High School
E	45	Female	BA Degree and PGCE	Mchakwini High	African	High School
F	27	Female	Bachelor of Education	Nkombose High	African	High School

G	30	Female	BA Degree and HDE	Nomathiya High	Africa n	High School
H	43	Female	BPaed	Madwaleni High	Africa n	High School
I	37	Male	BA Degree and PGCE	Nkosana High	Africa n	High School
J	30	Male	Bachelor of Education	Mehlokubhek a Secondary	Africa n	Secondary School

## 4.2 The Selected History Teachers' Content Knowledge of African history

As mentioned in Chapter Two, content knowledge is crucial for a history teacher to show historical literacy. This study set out to evaluate the content knowledge of history teachers participating in the study. The analysis of data in response to this question raised the following themes: knowledge of historical dates, knowledge of historical figures, knowledge of historical places, and knowledge of historical events. In general, the participants showed that they had average content knowledge of African history terms. In the case of these findings, average refers to the normal amount or quality of a particular thing or group.

### 4.2.1 Knowledge of historical dates

The analysis revealed the history teachers' content knowledge of historical dates, amongst other findings. Most of the dates asked for in the data-generation instruments were dates of independence of various African countries. All the participants answered the question correctly on independence dates for African countries, showing that that they had knowledge of such. Some participants even gave the complete information – that is the country, the day, the month, and the year. For example, these were Participant A's answers:

Country	Date of independence
South Africa	31 May 1961
Swaziland	6 September 1968

Namibia	21 March 1990
Mozambique	25 June 1975
Cameroon	1 January 1960

Participant C:

Country	Date of independence
South Africa	31 May 1961
Zimbabwe	18 April 1980
Kenya	12 December 1963
Zambia	24 October 1964
DRC	30 June 1960

Participant E:

Country	Date
Republic of Liberia	July 26 1847
Republic of South Africa	May 31 1910
Republic of Egypt	Feb 5 1941
Algeria	July 5 <sup>th</sup> 1962

Nevertheless, not all participants were able to give independence dates in a full format – some managed to give only the specific years. For instance, Participant F gave: Angola – 1976, Botswana – 1980, Zimbabwe – 1961, Kenya – 1961, and South Africa – 1961. Participant H managed to give: Ghana – 1961, Congo – 1960, Kenya – 1963, Tanzania – 1961 and Zimbabwe – 1980. Participant J also gave dates in short format as follows: South Africa – 1910, Swaziland – 1968, Mozambique – 1975, Zimbabwe – 1980 and Congo – 1960.

As can be seen above, some participants gave the incorrect independence dates, while others answered correctly. Participant F gave the independence date for Angola as 1976 instead of 1975; Botswana as 1980 instead of 1966; Zimbabwe as 1961 instead of 1980; and Kenya as 1961 instead of 1963. Participant H gave Ghana's independence as 1961 instead of 1957. Another example of the incorrect date was that of Participant E who gave February 1941 for the Republic of Egypt, instead of the correct date which is 18 July 1953. There was also some inconsistency in terms of South Africa's date of independence. Participants A, C and F stated that South Africa gained independence in 1961, while Participants E and J gave 1910 as the answer. Interestingly, none of them gave 1994, the year officially known for the end of Apartheid and the beginning of freedom and democracy.

The above information shows that participants had an average level of content knowledge when answering the question. This evaluation is based on the fact that, although some participants gave the independence dates in full, others could not do so. Participants who gave full independence dates showed that they had more knowledge than those who gave only the years. Furthermore, the participants, in some cases, gave incorrect dates. It was expected that participants give the correct full dates for independence, reflecting high levels of content knowledge on historical dates in African history.

#### **4.2.2 Knowledge of historical figures**

Although knowledge of historical dates was average, the participants showed above-average knowledge of individual historical figures. All the participants managed to respond to the question on historical figures, with the exception of one participant (Participant J) who could not give any answer. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all the answers were correct. In response to the question on African leaders, eight out of ten participants were able to give names of all 5 African leaders correctly, when asked by the interviewer. For example, Participant A gave the following African leaders as answers: King Shaka Zulu, Mahatma Gandhi, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, and Dr. Nelson Mandela, which were all correct. Besides this, most participants were also able to identify the names of the African leaders in the photos provided. Participant D had the following answers which were also all correct: Lilian Ngoyi, FW De Klerk, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and Shaka Zulu. Participant G also had the name of



King Shaka as one of the answers, in addition to Jonas Savimbi, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko and Frederick Willem De Klerk. This kind of answering showed that most of the participants had content knowledge on names of African leaders. However, Participant C gave only four African leaders, while Participant I only gave three leaders. Most participants had King Shaka Zulu as one of the African leaders in their answers, which were not surprising considering that these are teachers from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

From the evidence above, it can be seen that some participants focused on giving the names of local (South African) leaders, while others gave names of the leaders from different parts of the African continent. For instance, Participant I may have given 3 names, but the names were the following: Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, and Kwame Nkrumah. Participant J gave almost the same names: Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, Kwame Nkrumah, Mobuto Seseko, and Jonas Savimbi. Answering questions thus shows that participants demonstrated an above average level content knowledge when naming African leaders. The participants also showed that they knew African leaders, as they were able to identify their photos.

Nevertheless, the participants did not give much detail about the leaders they identified. They only gave much information on their history, particularly King Shaka and King Moshoeshoe, for whom they provided both positive and negative representations. In general, the participants described King Shaka as a cruel and bloodthirsty character. Participants A, B, G, and H described King Shaka as “bloodthirsty,” “cruel”, and “brutal.” The negative issues that were raised about King Shaka related to military issues. Participant C described him as “a fearsome king who ruled the militarised state”. In fact, Participant I said that “King Shaka [was] a warmonger.” Participant H mentioned that “King Shaka used to have quarrels with the neighbouring nations” and “was responsible for the Mfecane.” He also mentioned the common knowledge that King Shaka killed many people after the death of his mother, Nandi.

Participants H and D gave more information on these leaders, especially on King Shaka. They even gave information on how he conquered several nations to create the Zulu nation. The two participants displayed excellent levels of content knowledge on both King Shaka and King Moshoeshoe. Participant H said that “King Shaka has

been represented as a bloodthirsty and a cruel leader". Although King Moshoeshoe was also described by the participants in some negative terms, they were not as negative as terms used for King Shaka. Participant A described King Moshoeshoe as a weak leader, while Participant I considered King Moshoeshoe as someone who gave Basotho to the White people.

The participants also gave positive representations of both King Shaka and King Moshoeshoe. Participant D described King Shaka as a powerful leader who was able to unite different groups between the Pongola and Thukela regions into one powerful nation. He went further to describe King Shaka as "a leader who possessed leadership and diplomatic skills because he tried the best techniques to protect his people and also managed to keep good relationship with the neighbouring chiefdoms". Participant I concurred that King Shaka was "the creator of the Zulu Nation". Participant J said that King Shaka was "a hero and a courageous king". Participant A also described King Shaka as "a hero and a nation builder" while also describing King Moshoeshoe as "a diplomat". This was also echoed by Participant J who said that King Moshoeshoe was "a diplomat and a loyal king of Basotho". Additionally, Participant H described King Moshoeshoe "as king that took care of people that had run away from their kingdoms and ... had a sense of humour". Participant G described King Moshoeshoe as a very intelligent and reasonable leader. Participant I added that King Moshoeshoe was "a peace-loving person".

The above presentation on King Shaka and King Moshoeshoe shows that the participants had basically similar information about these leaders even though they gave different perspectives on both leaders. In their answers, it became clear that they knew these kings as both good and bad characters. This shows that they have different narratives on the content knowledge when it comes to some historical figures or characters. However, it should be noted with great concern that the participants did not give much extra information on the other historical figures that they managed to identify, particularly those not from southern Africa.

The findings on historical figures was not limited to individuals, but also extended to groups of people. When answering questions on the inhabitants of South Africa, participants showed a below-average level of content knowledge. Most participants showed that they had an idea about who the earliest inhabitants of South Africa were

although most of their information was flawed. Many participants mentioned the Khoikhoi as the first inhabitants of South Africa. For example, Participant A said: “It was the Khoikhoi; I say this because history tells us that these were people that had the first contact with the Europeans”. Participant I added: “the Khoikhoi and the Black people. Researchers say so”. He, however, could not adequately say how he differentiated the Khoikhoi from the Black people. Participant D also mentioned the Khoikhoi as the first inhabitants of South Africa. The reason given for this response was that “it was because history reflects that they were the first inhabitants in South Africa”. Participant H also mentioned that “Khoikhoi were the first inhabitants in South Africa”. The reason given by this participant was that they were indigenous and the participant said that history does not indicate their original country, it only shows South Africa”. Another participant who claimed that the Khoikhoi were the original inhabitants was Participant J. What is curious about most of the justifications for the answers was that they pinned it on “history” instead of producing actual evidence to support their claims.

Some participants were aware of not claiming that the earliest inhabitants of South Africa were the Khoikhoi. As Participant G answered: “Khoisan (the hunter gatherers) – they originated from the southern tip of Africa (South Africa). Their rock art is found on that region. The climate also allowed their socio-economic activities”. Participant C also mentioned “Khoisan as the answer and the reason given was that because they are the earliest distinct group”. Participant E also gave “Khoisan as the only answer”. One participant even responded that the earliest inhabitants of southern Africa were both the “Khoikhoi and the Khoisan” (Participant B) although they could not explain their answer.

From the above evidence, it is clear that the participants who were partially correct (the Khoisan) were able to give evidence for their answers, unlike those who gave the Khoikhoi as the answer. However, they either mentioned the Khoikhoi or the Khoisan as the answer for the first inhabitants whereas the correct answer is the San. The participants also showed that they were confused over the identity of the groups as was evidenced by claiming the Khoikhoi and Khoisan to be two distinct groups, when in fact the Khoisan are a combination of the Khoikhoi and the San. It was therefore not surprising that most participants could not explain their answers.

### 4.2.3 Knowledge of historical events

As noted earlier, in the case of this study, an average level of content knowledge refers to a standard regarded as a normal amount or quality of a particular thing or group. According to (Hart, 2019) below average level implies being at the bottom of the cognitive-ability ladder. This may mean that much more information must be possessed before the teacher can be regarded knowledgeable in a particular field of specialisation.

When answering the question on the number of people who died in the Congo under Leopold II of Belgium, participants also showed below-average level content knowledge. Not all participants correctly estimated the number; however, but most were able to give 10 000 000 as the number of people that died in the Congo. Some participants did not answer this question. The following participants gave these answers: Participant A – “as many as 10 million people died”; Participant C – “10 million people”; Participant I – “10 million people” and Participant J “10 000 000.” While these participants gave the correct rough estimate, one participant (Participant F) gave 6000 as the answer, which is an extremely low estimate, perhaps showing guesswork. Another participant who tried to give an answer but also could not get it right was Participant H who gave “History is mentioned as the answer”. Of ten participants, four could not give any answer (Participants B, G, D and E). These participants had no idea of the total number of people who died in the Congo under Leopold II, making no attempt to answer this. Participants thus reflected a below-average level of their content knowledge.

In response to a question on the slave trade as an historical event, participants also showed below-average content knowledge. For this question, which was also related to knowledge of historical dates, there was only one correct answer that was expected. However, participants gave many different answers, most of which were incorrect. Some participants did not give an answer for this question. This was an indication that they could not even try since they knew nothing. Only Participant A correctly by gave 1441 as the year in which the slave trade began. Other answers were as follows: Participant G – “In the 16<sup>th</sup> century”; Participant I – “During the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1700)”; Participant F – “1965”; Participant E – “during the 16<sup>th</sup> century”; and Participant H – “1760”. No answers came from: Participants J, D, C and B. Evidently, the question on

the Atlantic slave trade was a big challenge to almost all the participants. Most could not answer it; and most who tried were wrong, even when giving a general answer in the form of the century and not the actual year. This justifies the evaluation of the participants' content knowledge as below-average level.

Another historical event that was under focus in the data generation was the Cold War, particularly how Africa was involved in it. Participant I said that "the Super powers (Soviet Union and the USA) involved African countries as proxy [*sic*] during the Cold War". It was clear that this participant fully understood the question as they answered it briefly and soundly. However, the other participants gave different reasons for Africa to be involved in the Cold War. Participant E: "Soviet Union gave military support to the government of Angola, Mozambique and the ANC". Participants H and D were aligned in suggesting that "African countries were being colonised by the Europeans depending on the policy that they followed i.e. Communism or capitalism". The difference is that this participant viewed the Cold War to be a form of colonisation. Participant G mentioned that the "USSR wanted to spread communism, while on the other side USA wanted to contain communism in Africa and exploit natural resources for Africans". Participant G further mentioned that:

Africa also suffered civil wars, for example, in Mozambique FRELIMO was supported by the Soviet Union while RENAMO was supported by the USA. In Angola MPLA communists were supported financially and militarily by USSR whereas UNITA of Jonas Savimbi was supported by USA.

Such answers, although not straight to the point, were acceptably accurate responses to Africa's involvement in the Cold War, supported by cases of some of the African countries involved other than South Africa. Participant D gave an account of how South Africa was involved in the Cold War, saying that "South Africa was a capitalist country; it therefore had to participate on the side of USA during the times of Cold War". This participant also mentioned that "South Africa could not work with most of African countries and that is why it had to be on the side of the capitalists as it was the capitalist itself". Participant C gave almost the same answer as Participant G on Angola. Participant C said that "the Soviet Union (USSR) was sharing support with Angola Mozambique and the ANC, they were looking forward to a majority rule through peaceful means". Although many participants were able to give acceptable answers,

only one (Participant I) gave a very succinct but accurate answer. The others tended to give details without being able to define the Cold War, as experienced in Africa. Some participants gave answers that were off the mark. For example, Participant A wrongly claimed that: “the colonised African countries had to fight on the side of those that had colonised them. In some instances, Africans were involved in a war just because they were promised independence after war”. This participant seemed to be referring to the World Wars rather than the Cold War. Participant F answered about “the fall of the Berlin Wall” while Participant B answered simply “they were Allies”. The three participants (Participants A, B and F) did not answer correctly; and the answers of the latter two participants were also too short to fully comprehend. Nevertheless, most of the participants responded very well to this question, meaning that they showed average-level content knowledge when answering on the Cold War in Africa.

In relation to a question on the ways that Africans responded to colonialism, participants excelled with their content knowledge, giving answers without any difficulties. Most participants were able to give at least five ways in which Africans responded to colonialism. The participants gave different answers to this question but what was noticeable was that all those answers were correct. For example, Participant A said that:

Africans cooperated with colonists. Some chose to resist. Others decided to work for them. Some Africans decided to be sell-outs. Other Africans chose to resist against the colonial rule and died for their leaders or chiefs (nations).

Participant B:

Africans, although they did not have sufficient weapons to fight against Western countries, they however used their tactics. They were at first terrified and felt threatened. Some fled (ran away). Some became their cheap labour. Some resisted hence they were killed.

Participant I also gave a different, but correct answer to the above question by saying: “They accepted colonialism. Some allowed it. They fought against it. Resisted. Some cooperated.” Participant J responded by saying the following: “Accepted it, fought

against it, resisted it and some cooperated.” Evidently, the most similar answers given by participants were cooperation and acceptance of colonialism. However, there were other participants that gave different answers like Participant F, who said, “They protected their land. They sold land to Whites. Colonisation took away their customs. They became hooked to colonisation. They welcomed it as it’s theirs”. Participant G, like Participant F came with different, but correct answers: “There was enculturation and acculturation.” Participant H also had almost similar answers to that of participant G, saying that Africans left their culture and followed Western colonialists. Although these responses were largely different, they were also acceptably correct. It should be noted that Participants D, E, and C could not give answers to the question on the response by Africans to colonialism. Nevertheless, the answers given by other participants showed excellence in terms of their content knowledge.

#### **4.2.4 Knowledge of historical places**

The last aspect of historical content knowledge that emerged from the data was on historical places. For the question on African empires, participants showed some gaps in their content knowledge of African history. The following participants could not even answer the question: Participants J, D, C and B. Other participants, instead of giving five answers as per requirement, gave one or two answers. Participant G only responded with “Mapungubwe and Songhai”; while Participant D was only able to give the “Songhai empire.” Another participant (Participant B) showed very limited knowledge, giving one correct answer (Songhai Empire) and four wrong ones: “Shaka Zulu’s reign, King Cetshwayo’s reign, King Moshoeshoe’s reign.” The wrong answers did not in any way relate to historical places. Another participant who did not respond to the question was Participant F who simply gave a list of modern-day countries instead of giving the requested names of empires. This participant listed the following countries: Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Niger and Sudan. It can be concluded that most participants showed that they did not have content knowledge of terms of the African empires, as was seen by some participants (Participants F and B) confusing the empires with the African leaders and the African countries, while some failed to say anything in response.

Although most of participants did not do well when asked about ancient African empires, there were a few who did well. For example, Participant C gave: Kingdom of

Kush, the land of Punt, Kingdom of Aksum, The Mali Empire, The Songhai Empire and the Great Zimbabwe. Participant E listed: The Mali Empire, The Songhai Empire, The Great Zimbabwe, The Kingdom of Aksum, and The Kingdom of Kush. Participant A gave: Songhai Empire, Ghanaian empire, Empire of Egypt, Kingdom of Zimbabwe, The Empire of Mali, and The Kingdom of Mutapa. Participant G gave: Mapungubwe and Songhai. Some participants seemed to confuse nations with the empires. For example, Participant H listed: Sotho Kingdom, Zulu Kingdom, Ndwandwe, Bapedi and Ndebele. It should be noted that at least they had identified some precolonial African spaces and polities, even if they were not empires. These findings show that some participants had some good content knowledge of historical places while others had below-average knowledge.

In order to balance the questioning, I asked participants about historical places in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, where the participants were located. The participants showed excellent-level content knowledge in this case. For this question the participants had to give the history behind the naming of the listed places in KwaZulu-Natal. For instance, participants were asked to give the history behind the naming of the following KwaZulu-Natal places: Pietermaritzburg, Ulundi, Mtubatuba, Durban, Melmoth, Tongaat, KwaDukuza and Manzimtoti. Participants such as A, I, G, D, and C provided sufficient information on the history of the naming of the listed KwaZulu-Natal places. The information that they gave was acceptably correct and more or less the same. For instance, on the naming of Pietermaritzburg, Participant D briefly gave a background of the place by saying that “the place used to be King Cetshwayo’s palace, which, after being destroyed by the European Whites, was named after the colonial leader Pieter Maritz”. It should be noted that in actual fact, while the participant got the precolonial name correct, the answer about a certain Pieter Maritz was incorrect, since the place was named after two colonial leaders, and not one. Participant A mentioned that the place called Ulundi used to be a stronghold and the palace of the Zulu king. Many participants also gave the same history behind the naming of this place. Only Participant B gave a totally different answer and said “Ulundi – the battle of Ulundi”. This answer did not give a clear picture on the history of Ulundi, although one can say that the participant wanted to state that Ulundi was where the battle of Ulundi took place.



For Mtubatuba, Participant A said that it was named after the Mkhwanazi chief by the name of Mtubatuba. Participant I answered the chief of Mpukunyoni tribe; whereas Participant G said that Mtubatuba was named after Inkosi (chief) Mtubatuba Mkhwanazi, the only town to be named after a Black leader during the White rule in South Africa. Participant I answered King Mtubatuba without elaborating on the answer. Participant D also shared the same information on the naming of Mtubatuba, saying that this was named after the chief Mtubatuba who was a very wealthy man. The participants gave seemingly different information but actually painted the same picture about the name Mtubatuba.

Almost all the participants gave the same information on the naming of the city of Durban. Most of the participants said that Durban was named after Sir Benjamin D'urban. For example, Participant J said that "Durban was named after a colonial leader called Sir Benjamin D'urban". Participant G also responded that "Durban was named after Sir Benjamin D'urban who was the British Cape governor". Similarly, Participant A said that "Durban was named after Sir Benjamin D'urban". Participant I also stated that "a place Durban was named after Sir Benjamin D'urban, a British general and colonial administrator". However, there were other participants who offered a different dimension on the naming of the port city. Participant C said that "Durban (Port Natal) was a place where Boers clashed with the British over its control". On the same note Participant D said that "this place was known as Port Natal and it was a centre where the ships offloaded the goods". Participant I said that "Gandhi lived in Durban". The answers from Participants C, D and I show that there was some knowledge of the place called Durban; however, participants struggled to explain the history behind the name.

#### **4.2.5 Summary of participants' content knowledge of African history**

Overall, the participants showed that they did not have impressive content knowledge of African history. They did well in some aspects, but did quite poorly in others. They were able to display different levels of content knowledge depending on the focus of the questions. It was evident that most of the answers they were able to give in detail were on knowledge of KwaZulu-Natal history, rather than other parts of the continent.

### **4.3 The Selected History Teachers' Views of their Content Knowledge of African History**

This section discusses the different views that the participants revealed in relation to their levels of content knowledge on African history. These views were as follows: their content knowledge is based on general knowledge, their content knowledge is informed by teaching experiences; and their content knowledge is too broad to achieve. One of the participants said that he had many gaps in terms of content knowledge of African history which he had to fill through the formal schooling. In this way it became clear that some participants had gained knowledge of history through attending school.

#### **4.3.1 Content knowledge as based on general knowledge**

Participants therefore showed different levels of content knowledge depending on the issue under focus. In some cases, they gave above-average answers, while in some cases they struggled to answer the questions. Some of the content knowledge participants had accumulated was from what they have learned over time outside of the formal school system. This was emphasised by Participant A, who argued that the “questions that I could answer were about general knowledge that I already had”. This participant even made an example referring to a question on King Shaka saying that “this question required me to give information I had already learned from my home”. This participant said that “I was impressed with my content knowledge as the questions asked me to provide the information I had been taught by the elders from home this also helped strengthen my content knowledge of history”.

As with Participant H, Participant I was also impressed with his content knowledge on African history. This participant made a reference to a question on the history behind the place naming of KwaZulu-Natal. He claimed that “the questions were very easy since they were about some of the things that I already heard about even before I started schooling”. The participant mentioned that “although I learned about history behind KwaZulu Natal’s places but I already knew about this before going to school as I was taught by elders at homes.” Participant J was also impressed with his content knowledge and said that “the questions were manageable and not difficult, since they only required my basic knowledge as history teachers”. This was not a surprising

comment since it was in reference to the content on King Shaka and on places in KwaZulu-Natal, on which the participants had much to say.

It should be noted that the participants did not do as well on content outside South Africa as they did on content on South Africa. They explained that this was not the kind of history they had learned at home. In this regard, Participant E mentioned “even though what I learned at home was important in building our content knowledge and our interest in African history, I had many gaps which I had to fill through formal schooling”. He expressed his concern that “African history was not always given necessary attention but we were looking forward to government proposal to add more African history topics, including making the topic on Tanzania compulsory for the first term in Grade 12”.

#### **4.3.2 Content knowledge as based on teaching experience**

Still on the content that they were knowledgeable on, the participants noted that some of the questions that they answered correctly were easy. They had accumulated this knowledge over the years of teaching history. Participant H said that “For questions that I could answer I found them easy because they asked me about things that I teach learners in history”. This participant added that “The questions asked cover the content that I teach in history”. Other participants also said, “We also had some questions we found easy to answer as they required the information that we already knew”.

#### **4.3.3 Content knowledge as too broad to achieve**

The findings in Section 4.2 reflected that the participants’ content knowledge of African history was either average or even below average. The participants felt disappointed with their content knowledge, especially in cases where they were asked some questions which they failed to answer. Some participants admitted that their lack of content knowledge contributed to their failure to answer those questions. For instance, Participant F said that “one of the reasons why I was disappointed with my content knowledge was because some of us history teachers do not teach African history since we ourselves lack a background in African history”. This participant admitted that this was evident when they failed to answer some of the questions on African history outside of South Africa. Participant C also expressed disappointment, agreeing that “it

is true that there is a gap in terms of the content knowledge that I as the history teacher have in African history". The participant further said "the gap is caused by the way history curriculum is structured and taught at schools". This participant also mentioned that "some of us history teachers do not do our teaching properly as we give notes even for source-based questions". Participant C said that "this makes it difficult for me as a teacher to be not able to teach learners the necessary skills of answering questions correctly". Participant C further mentioned that this way of teaching "also makes the learners fail to learn about the skill of answering source-based questions". Participant H supported this statement and added that "this was one of the reasons I as the participant failed to answer some of the questions".

One of the participants, Participant A also commented that "I was of course disappointed with my content knowledge when we were having a focus group discussion". This participant said that "some of us history teachers do not provide enough information that would help learners answer questions correctly". Some history teachers do not have adequate content knowledge needed to teach history successfully. However, Participant A clarified that "this applies to African history not history in general". Participant E shared the same feeling of disappointment by saying that "the reason why some of us history teachers do not teach African history is because we do not understand it". Such comments show that some history teachers are not confident enough with African history; that they found it difficult to answer some questions during the focus-group discussion is testimony to this problem.

Participant E also showed some disappointment with regard to the content knowledge they have as history teachers. This participant (Participant E) mentioned that "one of the reasons that made me fail to answer some questions during the discussion was because I sometimes do not teach learners correct skills or correct methods". This means that such an error comes back to affect them (history teachers) when they, as teachers, have to use the same skills in teaching history, or when they are expected to answer questions. This also means that participants failed to answer questions that were structured similarly to the ones requiring skills they should have already taught their learners in teaching history. For instance, some participants failed to locate the African countries from the map of Africa, something they should easily have mastered

had they taught learners the skill of using sources efficiently. Here learners are taught how to identify places from the map or any information from the source.

Some of the participants explained their average or below average content knowledge of African history by reference to the limitations of the school curriculum. The participants believed that some questions asked during the focus group discussion were unfair to them, which is why they found them difficult to answer. For example, Participant D believed that “questions that were asked required me to give information that I had forgotten”. This participant further said that “some questions I was asked required me to provide information on some of the things I had taught maybe five years ago”. The reason given for not having taught the content was because of curriculum change. Participants E shared the same feeling with Participant D, saying that “some questions required me to provide answers whereas the books provided at schools do not have enough information that I need as the history teacher”. This participant further said that “the information about King Shaka that is in history books does not tell exactly who King Shaka was”. This participant pointed out that “it then becomes difficult for me as the history teacher to answer all questions that are asked about King Shaka”. Participant J also said that “questions that were asked during the focus group discussion were unfair as these questions wanted me to give information on things that I had not taught at schools”. When looking at the above comments it is clear that participants were unhappy with the questions that they were asked and which they could not answer.

What can also be inferred from the above claims is that the participants related their content knowledge, or lack thereof, to the school history curriculum and the approved textbooks. For instance, Participant D continued to point out that “some questions exposed me in a sense that what I was asked was not covered in history curriculum”. The participant further said that the “history curriculum does not have connections in terms of a curriculum covered from grade 10 to grade 12, it is disjointed”. Participant B supported Participant D by saying that “of course the curriculum for grade 10 and grade 12 do not have connections for both African history as well as the European history”. Participant D explained that “history curriculum taught at schools, does not cover important aspects in African history and this was one of the reasons why I found some questions unfair to me”. Still on this, Participant C commented that “one of the

reasons why I could not answer some questions was because I myself as the history teacher only depend on the prescribed books for information". This participant said that "the worst part about history school curriculum is that it only covers about ten percent of content required by learners and this caused me as a teacher to realise that questions asked to me were unfair as I could not give answers for some questions asked". Again, the above comments showed that the participants link their content gap to the lack of exposure to information in the curriculum and textbooks.

In spite of their issues with some of the questions, the participants were still happy that they were asked the interview question that I asked them. There was a feeling that the questions that were asked did not only require them to refresh but also empowered them in terms of content knowledge of African history. For example, Participant E said that the "questions asked during the focus group discussion were very helpful to me and they made me learn a lot of things". This participant supported this by saying that he was happy that the "questions that were asked started by asking information from local history and further expanded to the entire continent". Participants admitted that they were better at South African history and that they were not very good at the content knowledge of the history of the rest of the continent. Participant J added that the questions also exposed to him that he needed to learn certain content of African history. He stated that "the questions I was asked were very relevant as they all included important aspects that I need to teach my learners as a history teacher". This means that they saw this content knowledge as important, not just for themselves, but also for their learners.

In supporting Participant J, Participant D mentioned that "questions like the one on inhabitants and those on African empires allowed me as a participant to give more information in terms of giving information that was required by the questions". The participant further said that "this particular question allowed me as the teacher an opportunity to produce more knowledge I have on African history". Participant E elaborated that it was important to know "information from local, regional, South Africa as a whole as well as the entire African continent".

The participants were also proud of having been able to answer some of the questions correctly. Participant D commented that "the questions that I had answered during the focus group discussion were important to know in African history". This participant

made reference to a question on historical figures, which “contributed in showing the role that was played by women in African history”. Participants were thus happy to have been able to answer questions on topics that they considered historically significant. Participant H supported this by saying “this particular question allowed me as a participant with an opportunity to show that women in South Africa played a significant role in as far as the history of Africa is concerned”. Participant F also made reference to a question on the first inhabitants, stating that “I was very proud to answer it” because “the question allowed me to give a background of South Africa and who can truly claim the rightful ownership of South Africa.” Participant F further mentioned that “the correct answer to this question provided answers on the current debates on the first inhabitants of South Africa”. The participants were therefore proud to have been able to answer questions on significant topics.

#### **4.3.4 Summary of participants’ views on their content knowledge of African history**

The findings presented in this section showed the selected participants’ views with regard to their knowledge of African history. The participants expressed that they were not happy to have struggled to answer some of the questions accurately. They blamed their performance on curriculum change and the fact that the questions that they were asked were not in the school curriculum and the CAPS aligned textbooks. They were also proud of answering some questions accurately. The participants also revealed that, even in cases where they did not do well, they were pleased to have been exposed to the type of content knowledge of African history that they should possess.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the data findings from the participants. I have also used different themes and sub-themes in explaining how participants felt about their content knowledge during the focus-group discussion. The discussion has shown that participants had varying levels of content knowledge of African history. Participants were able to give the names of characters, depending on how much content knowledge was had. Participants were able to give answers in different forms; in most

cases the answers they provided were correct. This chapter also reveals that not all answers that were asked of participants were readily answered. The question on the Atlantic slave trade was beyond most teachers.

Participants were grouped on all four levels in rating their content knowledge of African history. The participants were able to show average level, below average level, above average level and excellent content knowledge when they answered questions during the focus-group discussion. Overall, for both themes addressed in this chapter, most participants were disappointed with themselves for not being able to answer questions asked. The participants blamed their lack of content knowledge on the change of curriculum and on the CAPS aligned books. However, the participants were also able to say that they were also proud to answer certain questions correctly during the focus-group discussion.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the findings I presented in Chapter Four. The discussion will refer to literature review and conceptual framework in order to make meaning of the findings. Certain scholars (that were cited in the literature review) will be key in supporting the findings that I presented in Chapter Four. The organisation of the discussion of findings will be presented in response to the two research questions:

1. What is the level of selected history teachers' content knowledge of African history?
2. How do selected history teachers view their content knowledge of African history?

For the first part of this chapter I will discuss the following themes: Knowledge of historical dates, knowledge of historical figures, knowledge of historical places and knowledge of historical events. I will discuss these themes for the second part: history content knowledge as based on general knowledge, history content knowledge as based on teaching experience, and history content knowledge as too broad to achieve.

#### **5.2 The Selected History Teachers' Content Knowledge of African History**

##### **5.2.1 Knowledge of historical dates**

Knowledge of historical dates is essential for a history teacher. As presented in Chapter Four, the participants showed an average level of content knowledge on historical dates such as dates of independence for African countries. The Collins Dictionary (2018) defines average as the level that is neither very good nor very bad, usually when one has hoped things would be better. This means that history teachers (as participants) did not have sufficient knowledge of dates. As noted by Sridah (2015) in Chapter Two, a history teacher must have knowledge about historical dates. This helps a history teacher to arrange events chronologically.

The literature shows that it is important to know dates in the study of history. Kochhar (2015) admit that some do not consider knowing exact dates as important in the study of history. However, it is important to remember when events have happened. The findings in Chapter Four reveal that, although participants gave dates for independent African countries, not all were correct: not all participants knew the exact dates. Interviews showed that Participants F, H and E gave the wrong dates for the independence for African countries. Nevertheless, anyone involved in the study of history should consider dates as important for content knowledge.

In Chapter Four, the findings reflected that participants performed differently in giving independence dates. Interview showed that Participants A, C and E gave full dates, while others such as Participants F, H and J gave dates in short, and among these dates some were wrong ones. For those who gave the full dates, their teaching of history evidently depends on the knowledge of dates. The findings in Chapter Four reflect that it is expected for history teachers to show high levels of content knowledge of historical dates in African history. Such teachers have more knowledge on historical dates in African history. However, those who either did not know the dates in full or did not know them at all indicated not much interest in that kind of content knowledge. Kingsberg (2015) reminds that focusing on dates in the study of history sometimes poses challenges such as knowing exact dates on which events happened. This may be the reason for participants performing differently during the focus-group discussion. Sridah (2015) mentions that it is important for a history teacher to know about dates in history; while Kingsberg (2015) avers that history teachers sometimes do not take knowing historical dates seriously.

Some teachers may think that knowing dates in history does not make one historically literate. However, knowing dates indicates historical literacy (Kingsberg, 2015). It was also clear during the focus-group discussion that failing to give correct dates or giving them in a short form shows that a history teacher has a gap in terms of historical literacy. It is not possible for a history teacher to know all the dates on which events occurred; however it is important to show that he or she has at least some knowledge of dates. Having said this, history teachers cannot be excused for confusing dates in which events happened. It was therefore not acceptable for some participants not to know the correct date for South African independence.

### **5.2.2 Knowledge of historical figures**

The findings showed that participants responded at an above-average level of content knowledge on names of historical figures. The participants showed that they consider knowing the names of historical figures very important in the study of history. The literature supports this – knowing about characters in history forms the basis of history as the subject. Scott (2009) supports this, adding that knowing characters of history helps the study to live – those studying it relate to the actions of characters. Pranomo et al. (2020), like Scott, say that knowing about historical figures in history adds to best practice in planting values. In other words, those who learn about historical characters accept the importance of coping actions of such historical figures. Pranomo et al. (2020) further mention that learning about heroes in history helps to motivate students to achieve humanistic and empathetic understanding of history. Those who study history should therefore know about historical figures. It is clear that knowing history characters adds to one's historical literacy.

The findings also revealed that not all participants responded according to the requirements of the questions. Some participants, although they gave the names of African leaders, did not all identify the expected number of leaders. Instead of naming five leaders only eight out of ten were able to give the expected number. It is possible for a teacher to know at least three characters as a sign that the teacher has some knowledge of historical figures. Although this is not enough, it can be regarded sufficient effort in terms of knowing characters. The literature reveals that knowing a certain number of characters in the study is sufficient as long as they are connected to the events that happened in history (Harkness, 2009). This shows that knowing about the minimum number of characters in history might be regarded as sufficient as long as they played an important role in the event. Harkness (2009) further mentions that sometimes it is unnecessary to know all the characters, losing focus on the important parts of the event such as the evidence, accuracy, and concerns for evidence.

The findings showed cases in which some participants only knew characters or groups of people from their country. Some of the teachers interviewed for this study thus lack some knowledge of African history in general. For example, Participant G and Participant I showed that they lack knowledge of African leaders as they could identify

a little number of these leaders when given pictures. A history teacher is supposed to have knowledge of both his country and that of foreign countries. This was exemplified, on a larger scale, by the Jewish historian Josephus, who knew much about ancient African history, despite not being born there (Maposa & Wasserman, 2012). Such scholars show that knowing the names of the characters in history helps to give meaning to the important events in history.

The participants showed that they could recognise the faces of African leaders when they were given photos in order to identify them. The interview showed that Participant A and Participant D gave the names of the 5 African leaders correctly while Participant C only gave 4 African leaders as answers. The interview revealed that Participant G only identified one African leader from the pictures given whereas Participant I was only able to identify 3 African leaders. This showed that they regarded the important role that these figures played in the making of history. Sullivan (2021) considers it important to know the faces of historical figures – the reader associates these with the times in which the character lived. Sullivan (2021) further says that knowing historical figures looked like helps one remember their role in the past. Felton and Allen (1990) maintain that knowing what historical figures looked like helps the individual develop a new range of skills needed in the study of history.

The findings on Chapter Four also show that the participants provided more than enough information on the characters. The interview showed that Participant H and D gave more information on King Moshoeshoe and King Shaka as one of them (Participant H) said that King Shaka has been represented as a bloodthirsty. Participant A described King Moshoeshoe as a weak leader while Participant I considered King Moshoeshoe as someone who gave Basotho to the Whites.

They did not only give names of individual figures but also gave names of these figures within their groups. Participants therefore also had information on the group of people the person mingled with. Knowing about such figures helps historians understand how groups of people, such as ancestors, have lived in the past (Angila, 2020). Angila (2020) further argues that knowing about groups of figures tells about how past societies interacted with one another; and this serves as key to humanity improving in the future. Bortolot (2003) agrees with Angila that societies in sub-Saharan Africa have

been able to preserve knowledge about the past through visual, verbal, and written art forms. Historians would otherwise not know how societies lived.

Participants could not give much information about the characters that they identified, with the exception of King Shaka and King Moshoeshoe. In Chapter Four the findings showed that the participants knew the kings as having both good and bad traits. The interviews also showed that Participant D described King Shaka as a powerful leader who was able to unite different groups between Pongola and Thukela regions. The interviews also showed that Participant J said that King Shaka was a hero and a courageous king. The interview further revealed that Participant A also described King Shaka as a hero and nation builder, also described King Moshoeshoe as a diplomat and a loyal king of Basotho. The interview also revealed that Participant H described King Moshoeshoe as king that took care of his people that had run away from their kingdoms and had the sense of humour. The interviews showed that Participant G described King Moshoeshoe as a very intelligent leader while Participant I added that King Moshoeshoe was a peace-loving person. The participants had almost the identical information about these kings although they gave different perspectives on them. The participants even gave information on the characters of these kings, i.e., they gave information on how King Shaka conquered the nations, and mentioned King Moshoeshoe as a weak leader.

### **5.2.3 Knowledge of historical events**

Knowledge of events is also another important part in the study of history. It is therefore important for anyone studying history to show some good knowledge of events. Teachers must be as conversant with events in history as with characters and dates. The findings from Chapter Four show that participants had the normal amount of knowledge (average knowledge) of events that form part of history. When answering a question on the Congo the participants displayed that they had below-average level content knowledge. Participants lacked some knowledge of the number of people who died in the Congo under Leopold II. The interview showed that the following participants gave the following answers: Participant A “as many as 10 million people died”, Participant C “10 million people”, Participant I, “10 million people” and Participant J “10 000 000. The interview showed that only one participant, Participant F gave 6000 as the answer. The interview showed that Participant H gave the answer

as “History is mentioned as the answer”. The interview showed that Participants B, D, G and E gave no answer. The literature reveals that events add to the meaning of the study of history (Reader’s Digest, 1992). These events had an important role in giving a clear picture of how history was constructed in the past. Findings showed that the participants did not have sufficient content of events in history.

The findings in Chapter Four also showed that participants struggled to give the correct answer for the question on the Atlantic slave trade, although they were expected to give one correct answer. The interview showed that only Participant A gave year 1441 as the correct answer in which the Atlantic Slave Trade began. The interview also showed that Participants J, D, C and B failed to give the answer while the other participants gave the wrong answers. It was evident that some participants could not answer this question correctly or at all just because they had not taught content on this for a number of years. Again, this kind of performance showed that the participants lacked content knowledge on this question. Participants would not be able to use events to give meaning of the past (Toyin, 2002). Events may be regarded as one of the important features of history, making it interesting and meaningful. A history teacher must therefore know events in order to teach history successfully.

The participants showed an average level of content knowledge when answering a question which required them to tell how Africa was involved in the Cold War. The participants were able to give correct answers on how Africa was involved in the Cold War. The interview revealed that Participant D said South Africa was a capitalist country, it therefore had to fight on the side of USA while Participant C said almost the same answer as Participant G on Angola. The interview showed that Participant C responded to this question by saying that the Soviet Union (USSR) was sharing support with Angola, Mozambique and the ANC, they were looking forward to a majority rule through peaceful means. The interview also showed that only 3 participants: Participants A, B and F answered the question incorrectly. The literature reveals that giving correct events of history passes on content knowledge. Shaw (2010) reports that events without the connections with people cannot be regarded as the domain of history or historical events. The literature reveals that knowing about events in history reminds that an event happens once – it therefore cannot be repeated (Shaw, 2010). Knowing some salient events in history is crucial to giving meaning to

the past. Joel (2020) agrees with Shaw that historians are usually interested in knowing about events. After analysing them, they understand how things happened in the past.

The findings in Chapter Four also showed that participants excelled when answering a question on colonialism. All the participants gave the total number (five ways) of ways that Africans responded to colonialism; there were only a few cases of participants not responding correctly. Although participants gave different answers they were all correct. The interview showed that Participant A said that Africans cooperated with Colonists and some chose to resist. The interview also showed that Participant B said Africans, although they did not have sufficient weapons to fight against Western countries, they however used their tactics and some fled. The interview showed that Participant I also gave a different but correct answer by saying that they accepted colonialism, some allowed it while others fought against it. The interview further revealed that only Participants D, E and C gave no answer for this question. Participants therefore had better knowledge of events during the times of colonialism in Africa; thus understanding how Africa was affected by this process. Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) explains the importance of such historical knowledge by pointing out that African economies are still struggling because the former colonisers still play a primary role.

#### **5.2.4 Knowledge of historical places**

For the question on African empires, participants showed some marked gaps in content knowledge of African history. Some gave limited answers, others confused empires with modern-day countries, while others could not even respond to the question. The interview showed that Participants J, D, C and B could not answer the question correctly. Participant F failed to answer the question by giving a list of modern-day countries instead of requested names of emperors. Four participants could not give any answer to the question on the African empires; while others failed to list five empires. The participants were expected to answer these questions correctly. This question was regarded as requiring only basic knowledge of history. Participants' lack of information was a concern. The lack of information might be caused by the lack of history background that the teachers could have. It indicated a gap in content knowledge of history. It highlighted the weakness of the history teachers

with regards to their knowledge of African empires. This can be solved by giving history teachers regular workshops that will try to give them more important information of African history. Refresher courses might also be an addition to this so that history teachers gain more information in African history content.

Those participants who responded correctly managed to show the importance of historical places in African history. The interview showed that participants like Participants A, I, G, D, and C provided sufficient information on the history of the naming of the listed KwaZulu-Natal places. For instance, on the naming of Pietermaritzburg, Participant D briefly gave a background of the place by saying that the place used to be king Cetshwayo's palace, which, after being destroyed by the European Whites was named after the colonial leader Pieter Maritz. The interview showed that Participant A mentioned that the place called Ulundi used to be the stronghold and the palace of the Zulu king. The interview also showed that only Participant B gave a totally different answer and said that Ulundi-the battle of Ulundi. The interview also showed that for Mtubatuba, Participant A said that it was named after the Mkhwanazi chief by the name Mtubatuba. Participant I answered by saying Mpukunyoni tribe while Participant G mentioned that Mtubatuba was named after Inkosi (chief) Mtubatuba Mkhwanazi, the only town to be named after a Black leader during the White rule in South Africa. The interview showed that Participant D shared the same information on the naming of Mtubatuba saying that this place was named after chief Mtubatuba who was a wealthy man. Literature shows that the African empires that they were asked about were unique and significant. For example, the Kingdom of Kush (the Egyptian neighbours to the south) was a regional power for over a thousand years, was rich in ebony, gold, myrrh, and in animals (Andrews, 2018). The literature also shows that King Shaka played an important role in the formation and expansion of the Zulu kingdom or empire (Deflem, 1999). Similarly, the Songhai empire was historically significant because it was highly structured, practising trade and industry, arts and culture, and education to high standards (Johanneson et al., 2017).

Despite their difficulty in responding to questions on historical places in African history, the participants knew about places in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Participants were



able to give the correct historical background behind the naming of places in KwaZulu-Natal.

The literature mentions that knowing about historical places adds to historical content knowledge. Scholars such as Dastgerdi and De Luca (2019) purport that having sufficient knowledge about various historical places is needed in making meaningful comparisons between places studied in history. Having knowledge of historical places helps teachers make sound and correct comparisons. One must be a reliable source of information, through having adequate content knowledge.

### **5.3 The Selected History Teachers' Views on their Content Knowledge of African History**

#### **5.3.1 Content knowledge as based on general knowledge**

The participants showed that some questions they had to answer during the focus group discussion required their general knowledge of history. The focus group discussion showed that this was emphasised by Participant A, who argued that the questions that the participant answered were about general knowledge. This participant expressed the feeling that "I was impressed with my content knowledge as the questions asked me to provide the information I had been taught by the elders from home which also strengthen my content knowledge of history". The focus group discussion also showed that Participant H like Participant I, were impressed with their content knowledge on African history. The focus group discussion showed that Participant I made a reference to the question on the history behind the place naming of KwaZulu-Natal. Some questions asked during the interview required teachers to give information they already knew from home, not from school. The focus group discussion showed that Participant I claimed that the questions were very easy since they were about some of the things they even knew about them before started schooling. Cohran (1986) states that teachers should show knowledge on their social, political, cultural, and physical environment. A teacher should have some general knowledge in order to teach history successfully. This is exactly what the participants

managed to show when they correctly answered questions during the focus group discussion.

In relation to the above argument, the participants did not do as well on content knowledge outside South Africa as they did on content on South Africa. Teachers explained that this was not the kind of history they learned at home. This shows that their general knowledge is limited to South African history, not the rest of Africa. Masooa and Twala (Masooa & Twala, 2014) argue that the emphasis has been only on the teaching of South African history over the years.

### **5.3.2 Content knowledge as based on teaching experience**

The findings also revealed that some of the content knowledge that the participants have might be based on the knowledge that they have acquired in their teaching experience. The focus group discussion showed that Participant H found the questions easy as they required information on what is covered in history curriculum. The focus group discussion also showed that other participants said that the questions they answered required the information that they already knew. Content knowledge forms the most important basis of information in the study of history. It allows a teacher to be knowledgeable and competent in a subject. Maposa and Wasserman (2009) believe that historical literacy can be achieved through school history. This means that it is important for history teachers to have knowledge of a subject and they can only achieve that through undergoing training as qualified teachers. Klieman (2017) supports the above claim by saying that one of the goals for historical literacy is for history learners to develop empathy for creators of primary sources. History learners achieve historical literacy through studying history at school. Taking history at school equips learners with an intellectual toolkit which prepares them to deal with historical disagreements and any such challenges they may encounter outside school (Lee, 2004). Learners should study history at school to obtain knowledge that prepares them for the outside world. This infers that teachers of history must be knowledgeable with the content of the subject for the learners to be empowered with quality historical data that will enable them to participate in nation-building.

Teaching experience might also be regarded as important for a history teacher to be able to answer any questions that the teacher may be asked. Beddes (2016) maintains

that history educators are supposed to be experts in history. This means that history teachers should know much about the subject, allowing them to answer any questions related to the subject. The good performance that participants displayed was an indication of the nature of their expertise in history. The nature of their expertise is such that they have good historical literacy on knowledge which is informed by general knowledge, teaching experience and the school curriculum.

### **5.3.3 Content knowledge as too broad to achieve**

The findings showed that the participants' content knowledge of African history was either average or even below average. The participants felt disappointed with their content knowledge, especially when they were asked questions which they failed to answer. The focus group discussion showed that Participant F was also disappointed with the performance and the reason for this was the lack of background that the participant had in African history. Some participants admitted that their lack of content knowledge contributed to their failure to answer those questions. It should be acknowledged that history teachers may not know everything on African history, even though they have to display that they have an acceptable level of content knowledge.

The findings in Chapter Four revealed that participants were disappointed with their performance in failing to answer some questions. The focus group discussion showed that Participant C expressed disappointment and blamed that to the gap of content knowledge in African history which was caused by the way history curriculum is structured and taught at schools. The focus group discussion also showed that Participant H supported Participant C by expressing disappointment with the performance displayed during the focus group discussion. The focus group discussion showed that Participant C further confirmed that the reason of struggling to answer questions was caused by the way teachers teach learners at schools. Participant H supported by saying that lacking skills of answering source-based questions were a cause that made them fail to answer such questions during the focus group discussion. They admitted to lacking background on African history. This is acknowledged by Mann (2014) who argues that people should not treat teachers as the holders of all knowledge irrespective of their role of teaching in their everyday lives. Teachers are also human beings, therefore cannot know everything. They might excel in some sections and fail to impress in others.

The participants further mentioned that one of the reasons why they did not show acceptable levels of content knowledge of African history was because they did not have enough resources. This was confirmed by the focus group discussion as Participant E shared the same feeling with Participant D by saying that some questions asked required them to have information not provided in the books they use at schools. The focus group discussion also revealed that Participant J was not happy about some questions asked during the focus group discussion since they required answers on things they had not taught at schools. According to Mann (2014), some resources do not provide teachers with all the information they need; participants became disappointed with their content knowledge when unable to answer questions.

Another finding from Chapter Four showed that some of the questions that the participants were asked were beyond their scope, not being covered in the school curriculum. The focus group discussion showed that Participant D mentioned that some questions asked were not part of what is taught at schools and were therefore exposing participants. The focus group discussion also showed that Participant B supported Participant D by saying that the curriculum for grade 10 and grade 12 do not have connections for both South African history and European history. The focus group discussion showed that Participant D said that history curriculum taught at schools does not cover important aspects of African history. Teachers cannot know everything especially when not in the curriculum (Butler, 2018). Wilkin (2018) agrees with Butler that many teachers simply teach the curriculum without having any outside knowledge of a subject; their knowledge of the subject is thus limited. Using only the school curriculum is inadequate to gaining success in teaching.

The participants believed that some questions asked were unfair. They required them to give information that they had forgotten. Some participants said that questions they were asked required them to give information they had taught five years previously. The focus group discussion showed that Participant D said that some questions that were asked required answers they had forgotten. Participant D supported this by saying that questions that were asked to the participants required the information that they were supposed to have whereas the books used at schools do not have enough information needed by the teachers. The literature review in Chapter Two shows that relying on textbooks may make history teachers not to perform at their best. Some

scholars such as Straus (2013) agree with Gill (2012) that, instead of relying solely on the textbook, a good history teacher searches for resources. Some of the resources that the teacher can make use of include computers, internet, videos, feature films, documentaries, slides, local television stations (Lee, 2002; Samoa, 2003; Straus, 2013). The use of various methods especially involving technology, enables learners to access information in a differentiated way, some learners learning actively and visually (Lee, 2002; Samoa, 2003). As presented in Chapter Two scholars continue to emphasise that there are many other resources that history teachers may use on top of the textbooks. Straus (2013) says that downloading information from websites helps learners develop critical skills in studying issues of the past, while providing learners with opportunities of studying history easily through technology. Straus (2013) adds that the history teacher has to give learners activities such as projects to keep them motivated and learning. Cherry (2021) reminds that forgetting is natural. Recording information is essential to remembering information learned in the past. Cherry (2021) adds that factors like how information was learned and how frequently rehearsed play an important role in how quickly these memories are lost. Terada (2017) agrees with the above statement: it is natural to forget information learned in the past. Therefore, while people forget knowledge that they have learned in the past, there are also many resources that help the teacher to keep abreast with knowledge.

Participants seemed to relate their content knowledge, or lack thereof, to the school history curriculum and the approved textbooks. Although this was the case, participants were also proud that they were able to answer some questions correctly. The focus group discussion showed that Participant D commented that questions that were asked were very important to know in African history. The focus group discussion also showed that Participant H supported Participant D by saying that the question on the role of women provided an opportunity to show the significance of women in the history of South Africa. The focus group discussion also showed that Participant F was happy that questions such as the one on inhabitants allowed them to provide answers on current debates on who are the inhabitants of South Africa. Participants were asked questions that exposed them to content knowledge on African history that they should have known. Textbooks are essential in the schools. Their absence is disastrous as in the case of the Limpopo Province when the Department of Education failed to deliver

textbooks to learners (Variava, 2015). Variava (2015) further mentions that the researchers reveal that having access to textbooks is a contributor to improved performances. Motherway (2008) states that both textbooks and curriculum development are important elements in the teaching of learners at schools. In addition to these aspects, teacher development is also important in helping the teacher gain more knowledge for the teaching of history.

## **5.4 Reflection on the Study**

### **5.4.1 Methodological reflections**

The methodologies of this study worked; however, there were challenges with which I was able to deal successfully. Because I did not use all history teachers available, I had to conduct sampling. I had to use a cluster meeting for history teachers. I asked permission from the subject advisors to explain the study and to ask history teachers to participate in the study. I then approached principals for permission to work with their teachers who had agreed to participate in the study. One of the challenges that I had to face was that there was no time to meet with all the teachers. In resolving this problem, I had to ask the participants to give me their time after work and had to explain that the session was not going to be long. Fortunately, the participants agreed to participate in the study although it was during the end of year period. Some teachers had other commitments to attend to. The sampling of ten history teachers from Mtubatuba circuit helped me collect all the necessary data for the study. The questions that I asked the participants were easy, fair, and straightforward – participants understood what was required. The participants showed this through answering most questions without difficulties. The methodology that I used worked well as the number of participants I chose was able to give me all the information that I needed. I had to use the general conclusions concerning the varying levels of historical content knowledge of teachers according to the ratings that were identified. I had to use conceptual framework in Chapter Two as this was useful for Mathematical Literacy it also helped me make conclusion.

### **5.4.2 Reflection on the findings**

The participants enjoyed taking part in the study and seemed to benefit by it. Participants had to show the level they had in terms of content knowledge of African history. Since the literature did not reveal any scholars conceptualising levels of historical literacy, I had to adapt to the levels of mathematical literacy used by Kaizer and Willander (2005). The participants had to show the level of nominal literacy. This is a below-average level of historical literacy which participants showed in their content knowledge on historical events. Another level adapted from Kaizer and Wilander (2005) is functional literacy or an average level of content knowledge of historical dates. The third level adapted from Kaizer and Willander (2005) was multidimensional literacy. This is excellent historical literacy that participants showed in relation to their knowledge of historical places. The participants also showed that they had above-average level of content knowledge. Kaizer and Willander (2005) call the level conceptual and procedural literacy pertaining to the content knowledge of historical figures. The findings of the study showed that the content knowledge levels of participants served as the ways of answering or responding to the two research questions of the study.

### **5.4.3 Personal reflections**

As a teacher, this study has taught me the importance of a history teacher having content knowledge so that she/he is able to teach successfully. Among other things that the study has taught me is that it is important for teachers to work as a group and this helps them boost each other in terms of sharing knowledge. Working in this study has further helped me realise that studying history at a higher level helps one gain more knowledge about the subject.

Professionally, being involved in this study has increased my passion for the subject. The study has also helped me realise that how important it is for a subject to be taught at all levels. I say this because the study showed that content on African history is needed in the South African curriculum and African people should have it as the basis of their knowledge of the study of history. I have also realised that colonisation had a

negative effect in as far as the study of history is concerned. Some teachers of history still lack content in African history simply because they were made to believe that knowing European history is something important than knowing African history. I have also learned that it is important to decolonise the study of history by focusing on more African topics than those that are European. Therefore Africanisation, indigenisation and globalisation of historical themes is very important to be considered in order to empower history teachers. It was evident during the focus group that some history teachers showed that they lacked some information that was required about African history. Therefore, being involved in this study helped me grow as a teacher and as a researcher.

### **5.5.1 Implications of the study**

The study has contributed much to the way in which the teaching of history should be viewed. My rationale for conducting this study is that while I was still a learner I realised that my teachers lacked content knowledge in their teaching, especially when it came to the basic knowledge of Africa history. This gave me an interest in undertaking this study with the hope that it will open eyes to anyone coming across with it.

The study has contributed much to different stakeholders in education. The study has helped history teachers realise that they have gaps in terms of content knowledge of history. This on another hand has helped them to strive for changing this by means of improving their level of content knowledge. This was also an eye opener for the teachers as they realised that they should not only have to rely on the textbooks but also to look for more information from other sources. Some of these history teachers have openly said that they are considering furthering their studies in history, now taking the subject more seriously.

The study has suggested that policymakers start considering the study of African history as more important. After reading this dissertation, it is hoped that policymakers will start developing policies emphasising the teaching of African history in schools. The policymakers will also have to make sure that history teachers are inducted into



the teaching of African history so that they gain confidence while teaching it. This approach will further help history teachers obtain more content knowledge on the content of African history. The policymakers will also have to make sure that more topics covered in South African curriculum are in African history; history teachers will then have a better chance of teaching more African history topics. The policymakers should make it compulsory for history teachers to teach African topics since the findings showed that some history teachers confessed that they do not teach African history topics. Training institutions should also organise workshops in order to make sure that history teachers refresh their content on African history. Training institutions also have to ensure that these refreshing programmes are monitored properly. This will help to make sure that history curriculum at school is balanced and taught perfectly.

### **5.5.2 Implications for further studies**

The study should have included the principals of the schools in order for them to have an input into the teaching of African history in their schools. I suggest that other researchers involve the principals – some showed an interest in taking part in the study, offering input in the study. They could not be included in the study as the focus of the study was on history teachers only. I may also like to involve the policymakers when furthering my studies. I believe that policymakers can play an important role by introducing policies emphasising the teaching of African history in school. The policymakers may also have influence in deciding that more African history topics be covered in the curriculum. I also feel that training institutions should be involved here so that they take part in retraining the teachers so that they have content knowledge in African history. Training institutions may also be helpful in making sure their history curriculum covers more African history topics. The involvement of training institutions may also help in decolonising the study of history by making sure that only African topics are there in their curriculum since more European history topics have been taught in the past. This will help to avoid having history teachers who are not confident with African history content and who as a result end up not teaching African history topics with confidence.

I could have decided not only to focus on African history content knowledge, but also on the content of world history. This would help me to gain more information on the

content knowledge of history teachers in the subject as it is. Some of the challenges that I came across in the study was that some history teachers still lack content knowledge; and as a result, they cannot teach it. I realised that some effort must be made to help those teachers achieve an acceptable level in terms of content knowledge. Proper induction needs to be introduced so that teachers gain more knowledge of history as their teaching subject.

## **5.6. Review of the study**

In this section I offer a review of the dissertation, showing how each chapter connects with the other. In Chapter One, I lay the foundation of the study and explain how the study was rationalised and deemed significant.

In Chapter Two, the study was a literature review in which I thematically reviewed the available scholarly footprint. This review features both national and international literature on the content knowledge of history teachers, and the founding factors of both professional and personal content knowledge of African history is debated. I also explain the conceptual framework for this study, which is historical literacy as content knowledge.

Chapter Three deals with the research design and methodology that I used in the study. The research design, paradigm, research approach, methodology, data analysis, ethics, trustworthiness and limitations are discussed. In this chapter, all methodological choices are fully explained and justified in order to make sense of why they were used.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the analysis of the data that was generated. It discusses and scrutinises the findings in response to each critical question. The presentation of the findings is done thematically and is also guided by the conceptual framework explained in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter Four. The discussion refers to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and conceptual framework in order to make meaning of the findings. Different scholars play a crucial role in this discussion

and they make it interesting to the reader of this dissertation. The discussion is also organised according to the themes presented in Chapter Four. The last part is the conclusion of this dissertation, in which the research questions are fully answered. It also offers a review of the dissertation, presents my methodological reflections, and discusses the limitations of the study. The dissertation is concluded with provision of possible angles of further exploration from the knowledge gained from the research.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The findings of this study show that there is still some gaps in terms of the content knowledge that history teachers have. This means some efforts have to be made so that history teachers are assisted with the content knowledge they have. Training institutions like the universities should come up with programmes with which they will retrain history teachers especially on African history content. The Department of Basic Education and the Provincial Department of Kwazulu-Natal should also have programmes whereby they will ensure that the newly appointed history teachers have enough content regarding African history. They should organise training workshops that will help teachers gain more knowledge in African history. Surely if this happens history teachers might be able to teach African history without any difficulties. From the discussion during the focus group discussion it became clear that there are not enough African topics covered in the history curriculum at schools. This should be attended to by ensuring that more African history topics are added in the curriculum. The policy makers may also play an important role in making sure that African history is made compulsory at schools at all levels.

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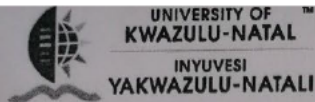
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## Appendix A: The University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethical Approval Letter



18 November 2020

Mr Emmanuel Bongumusa Zulu (951040882)  
School Of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Zulu,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001923/2020

Project title: An exploration of selected South African history teachers content knowledge in African history

Degree: Masters

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 27 August 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL** on the following condition:

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

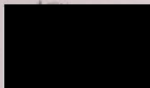
This approval is valid until 18 November 2021.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa


Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: [hssrec@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hssrec@ukzn.ac.za) Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



## Appendix B: Permission letter from the KZN Department of Education

 **KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DIRECTORATE:**

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  
Office of the Head of Department  
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201  
Tel: 033 392 1063 / 4 Fax: 033 392 1203

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Enquiries: Phindile Duma Tel: 033 392 1063 Ref.: 2/4/8/6000

Mr EB Zulu  
PO Box 41  
**MTUBATUBA**  
3935

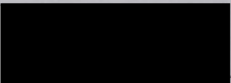
Dear Mr Zulu

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DōE INSTITUTIONS**

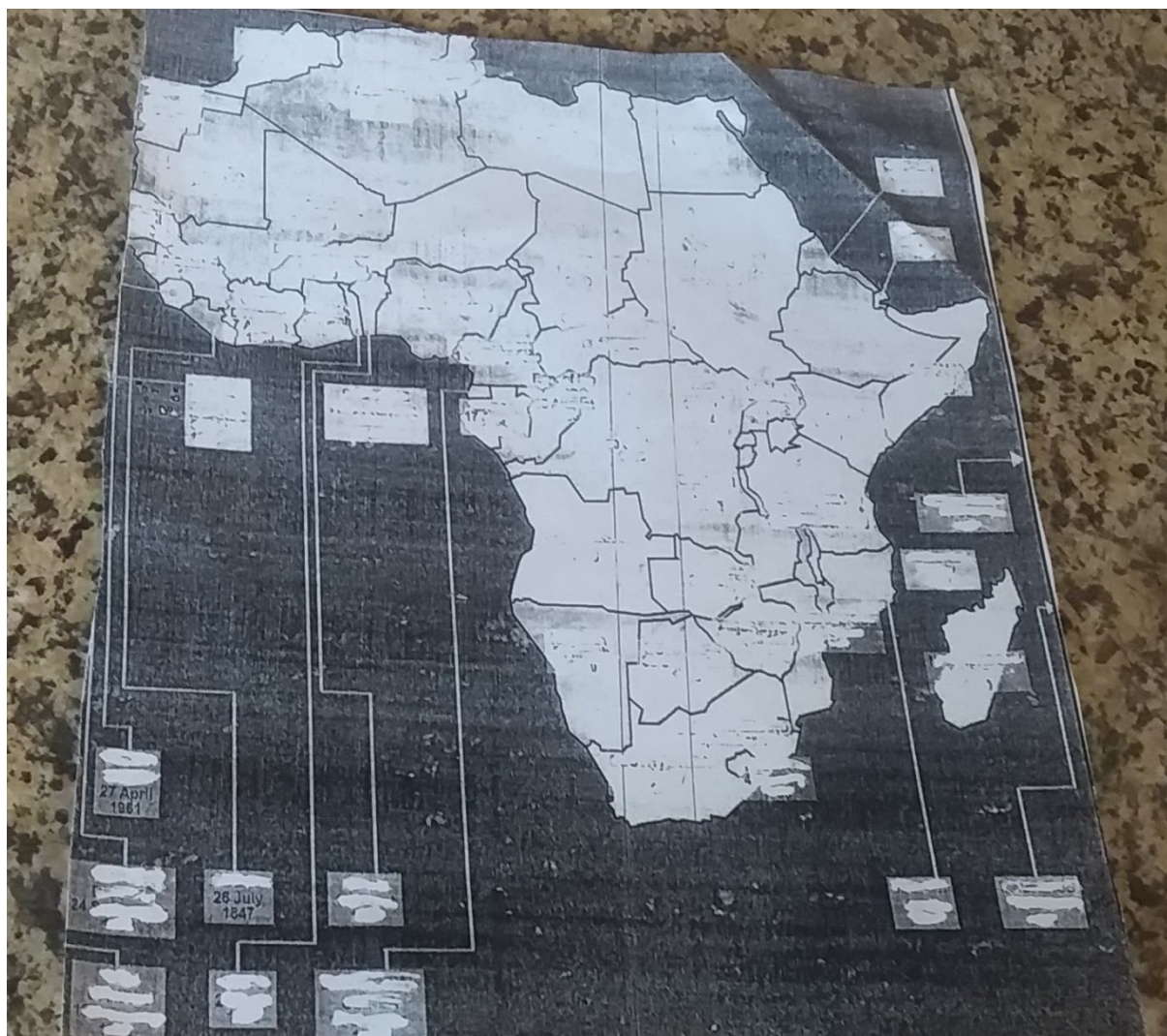
Your application to conduct research entitled: **"AN EXPLORATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY TEACHERS' CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN AFRICAN HISTORY"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 18 August 2020 to 03 January 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

**UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT**

  
Dr. EV Nzama  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 11/08/2020

## Appendix C: Data generation instruments – African countries

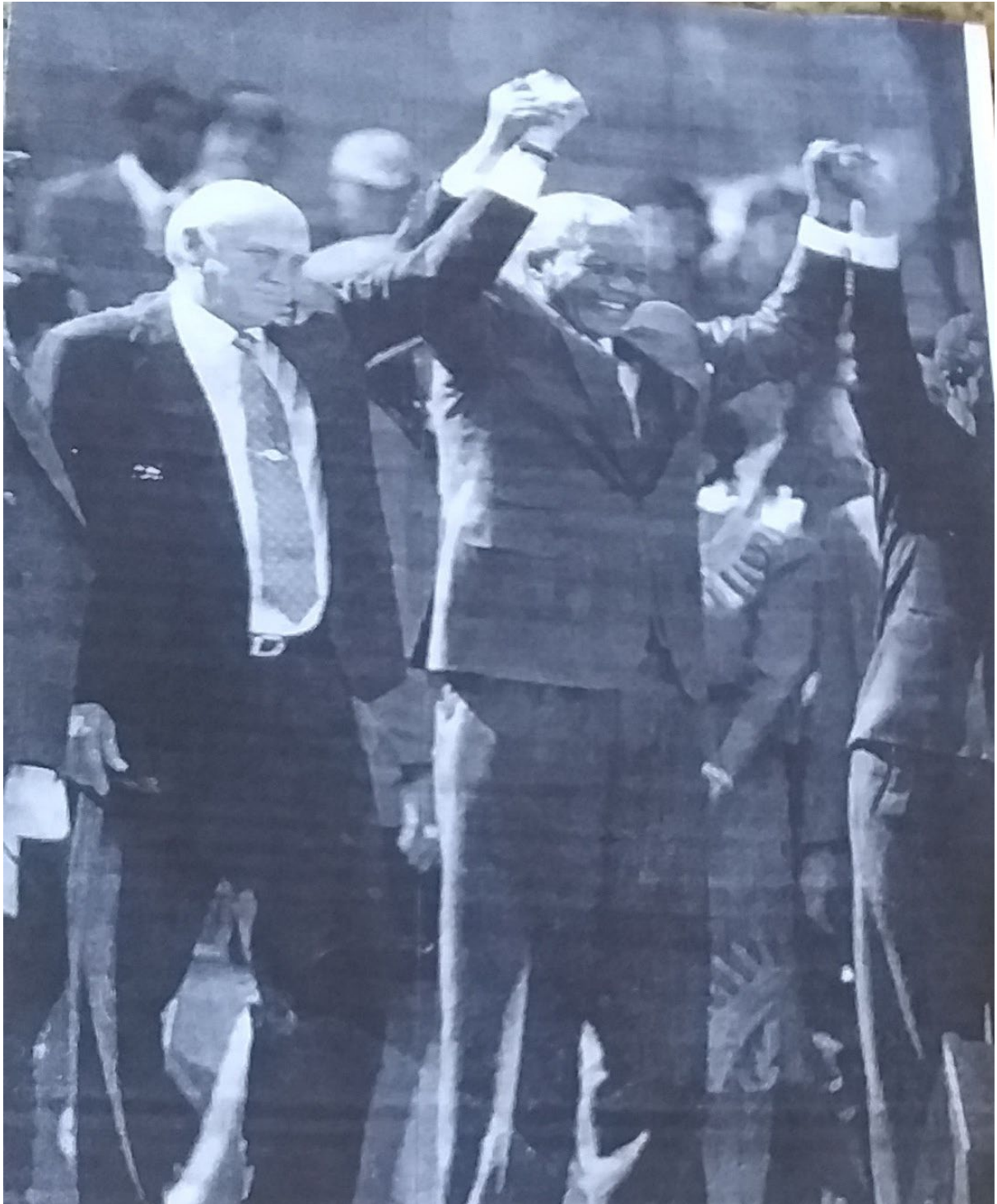




## Appendix D: African leaders



## Appendix D: African leaders





## **Appendix E: Interview questions – Personal interview questions**

1. Give the names of the following African leaders in the pictures. Mention only 5 leaders.
2. Locate these 5 African countries on the map provided. Give me only 5 countries.
3. State the years that the following 5 African countries gained independence. Give me only 5.
4. Identify any 5 Ancient African empires.
5. When did the Atlantic Slave Trade take place?
6. Who were the first inhabitants in South Africa? Why do you say so?
7. How many people died in the Congo through King Leopold's colonial exploitation?
8. How was Africa involved in the Cold War?
9. Name any 2 male and 2 female historical figures from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras.
10. What are the different representations of King Shaka and King Moshoeshoe?
11. Give the history behind these KZN's places: Pietermaritzburg, Ulundi, Mtubatuba, Durban, Melmoth, Tongaat, KwaDukuza and Manzimtoti.
12. State 5 ways in which Africans responded to Western colonialism.

## **Focus group discussion questions**

13. What are your comments on the questions that you could answer and those you could not answer?
14. Do you think these questions are important to know in African history?
15. Which aspects of African history do you think you should know as a history teacher?

## Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

**UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE (HSSREC)**

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL  
For research with human participants

**INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE**

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 10 December 2020

Greetings: History Teacher

My name is Emmanuel Bongumusa Zulu from the UKZN Edgewood campus, My supervisor is Doctor T.M. Maposa, Phone: 031 260 3546, Cell: 079 157 5241 Email: [maposam2@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:maposam2@ukzn.ac.za)

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on history teachers. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore history teachers' content knowledge of African history. The study is expected to enroll ten history teachers from various schools in Mtubatuba circuit which is on the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal province. It will involve the following procedures: focus group discussions whereby semi-structured interview questions will be used to generate data from the participants. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be one day. The study is self-funded.

We hope that the study will create the following benefits: history teachers will reflect on their content knowledge of teaching a history subject; the study will also contribute knowledge that policymakers can consult in the development of the History curriculum.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number(\_\_\_\_\_)).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 082 954 4624, email: [ogengele@gmail.com](mailto:ogengele@gmail.com) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

Research Office, Westville Campus  
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Participation in this study will be voluntary and participants will be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time they feel so. No penalties will be given to anyone refusing to participate in the study, and also to the participants who decide to withdraw from the study. No participants will be forced to resign from the study by the researchers under any circumstances.

BREC UKZN Q15 2008

1

## Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

This study will not offer participants any reimbursements or incentives and there will be no costs that will be incurred to participants in the study. No monies or some sort of incentives will be paid to the participants by the researcher.

Ethical issues will be taken into consideration in this study since they are very important to be considered in research. The participants will be made to sign an informed consent form that they will have been given within enough time to read and understand before signing. Privacy will also be considered in this study as I will make sure that all what will be discussed in a focus group discussion will remain there. No information discussed during the focus group discussion will be shared with anyone who is not participating in the study.

I will make sure that the issue of confidentiality is taken into consideration in this study. For example, I will make sure that no names of participants will be published in the study. All the information about participants will be kept secret or will remain anonymous. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's office. The data will be kept available for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed through shredding.

### CONSENT

I M.J. METHULA have been informed about the study entitled: An exploration of selected South African history teachers' content knowledge in African history by Mr Emmanuel Bongumusa Zulu.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 0829544624.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION  
Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

## Appendix G: Gatekeepers' permission letter from the school principals.

P O BOX 41  
MTUBATUBA  
3935  
23 NOVEMBER 2020

THE PRINCIPAL  
NOMATHIYA HIGH SCHOOL  
P O BOX 728  
MTUBATUBA  
3935

Dear Sir

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

My name is Emmanuel Bongumusa Zulu from the UKZN Edgewood campus. This letter serves to seek permission to conduct research on history teachers in your institution. The topic for my research is "An exploration of selected South African history teachers' content knowledge in African history".

The aim and purpose of this research is to explore history teachers' content knowledge of African history. The study is expected to enroll ten history teachers from various schools in Mtubatuba circuit which is on the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal province. It will involve the following procedures: focus group discussions whereby semi-structured interview questions will be used to generate data from the participants. The duration of your history teachers' participation, if you choose to grant me permission, is expected to be one day and I hope to generate data on a day that is convenient for your school in April 2020. The study is self-funded.

We hope that the study will create the following benefits: history teachers will reflect on their content knowledge of teaching a history subject; the study will also contribute knowledge that policymakers can consult in the development of the History curriculum.

The ethics of the research will be promoted by ensuring that the participants are aware of the following:

- The nature and purpose of research
- The fact that participation is voluntary
- The responses will be treated in a confidential manner
- Any limits of confidentiality which may apply
- Their anonymity will be ensured
- Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequence to themselves

My supervisor is Dr T.M. Maposa, Phone: 031 260 3546, Cell: ( ) Email: [maposam2@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:maposam2@ukzn.ac.za).



## Appendix G: Gatekeepers Permission letter from the principals

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at [REDACTED]  
email: [ogengele@gmail.com](mailto:ogengele@gmail.com) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics  
Committee, contact details as follows:

Research Office, Westville Campus

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Yours faithfully

Mr E.B Zulu

Declaration by the School Principal

I, NOABA T.C., give consent for my teacher to participate in the above mentioned  
study

Principal's signature: [REDACTED]

Principal's cell number: [REDACTED]

Nomathiya Technical High School  
"Light of the Nation"  
P.O. Box 728, Mtubatuba, 3935  
25 NOV 2020  
Tel: 035 550 8079  
Email: [nomathiyatech@gmail.com](mailto:nomathiyatech@gmail.com)  
Department of Education

**APPENDIX H: Editor's letter**



**Lydia Weight**  
**NTSD English Specialist**  
**SACE No: 11135129**

**E-mail: [lydiaweight@gmail.com](mailto:lydiaweight@gmail.com)**

Pinpoint Proofreading Services

40 Ridge Rd

Kloof

Durban

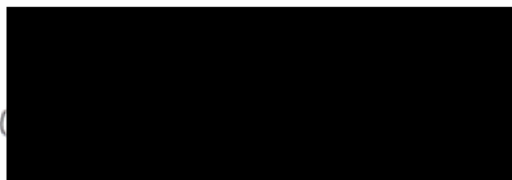
3610

2 December 2021

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Lydia Weight, have proofread the document titled: An exploration of selected South African history teachers' content knowledge of African history, by Emmanuel Zulu. I have made all the necessary corrections. The document is therefore ready for presentation to the destined authority.

Yours faithfully



L. Weight

## APPENDIX I: Turnitin Similarity Report

The screenshot displays the Turnitin Feedback Studio interface in a Google Chrome browser. The main document area shows the title "AN EXPLORATION OF SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY TEACHERS' CONTENT KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICAN HISTORY" by EMMANUEL BONGUMUSA ZULU. A red box highlights a similarity match: "Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Education (History Education)".

On the right, the "Match Overview" panel shows a total similarity score of 15%. Below this, a list of six sources is provided, each with a percentage match:

Rank	Source	Match Percentage
1	researchspace.ukzn.ac...	3%
2	Submitted to University...	2%
3	hdl.handle.net	1%
4	repository.up.ac.za	<1%
5	www.scribd.com	<1%
6	scholarworks.waldenu...	<1%

The bottom of the interface shows "Page: 1 of 101", "Word Count: 29316", and options for "Text-Only Report" and "High Resolution" (set to On).